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THE EUROPEAN BORDERSCAPE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19

The Canary Islands as setting of the new *border play*

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Amor, ilusión, ensueños, quimeras y alegría,
dejé en ese desierto desolado y doliente,
y mi vida sin sueños es hoy una agonía...
Mi mente alucinada por un raro espejismo
imaginó un divino país de fantasía,
y mi alma locamente voló con su idealismo
en busca del Amor... Después, solo en la senda,
el cielo y yo quedamos frente a frente... Una amarga
soledad me cubría cada instante más larga,
y con mis dolorosos amores de leyenda
tuve que desandar todo el camino andado...
Y ya lo véis; retomo, solo, con mi estupenda
tristeza y mi fracaso; silencioso y cansado.

Poem by José Navarro Montes de Oca,
poet from the Canary Islands who emigrated to Cuba
Barcas Azules, Cienfuegos (Cuba), 1916

I Empty cayucos (fishing wooden boats) in the dock of Arguineguín. My own photograph.

In this thesis I aim to explore the convergence of the Covid-19 pandemic and the migratory event that has taken place in the Canary Islands archipelago, Spain, during the year 2020, focusing more specifically on the island of Gran Canaria. In this sense, I question the development of this event into a crisis and the effects of the consequent urgency management on the reconfiguration of the actors and the materiality of the European border of the Canary Islands. I will also address the transformations of the insular political landscape since this event and, in particular, the rise of the extreme right. The objective of this thesis is to think, through the example of the Canary Islands, the effect that the Coronavirus pandemic will have on other European borders.

Keywords: European border; border control; island studies; irregular immigration; crisis management

Table of contents

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Introduction

The Atlantic migratory route of the Canary Islands, considered virtually obsolete for the past ten years, has returned to the forefront of the international scene during 2020. Indeed, the Spanish authorities reported an 881% increase in the number of migrants arriving on its shores compared to 2019 (EP, 2021). Some 22,000 people have reached the islands from various enclaves in Morocco, Western Sahara and West Africa, a trend that has continued during this year 2021 (Bautista, 18 May 2021). While this figure may seem relatively low compared to other border areas of Europe, the archipelago has been completely overwhelmed by this situation, mainly due to the already complex context generated by the Covid-19 epidemic.

I approach this sudden arrival of migrants as an event in the sense that Alain Badiou defines it, that is, as a process through which the arising of a situation disables the operative modes by which we compose with our environment (Badiou, 2007). Here, the sudden and radical emergence of excluded populations on the social scene, in this case irregular migrants, has come to disrupt the appearance of normality and has opened up a process of reconfiguration of reality. Although the arrival of irregular migrants to the Canary archipelago is a recurrent phenomenon and, in this sense, predictable, its articulation with the Covid-19 pandemic has created an unprecedented event on the island that has left this part of the European border without the tools to cope with the situation. Border management in the islands in the current epidemic context has had to be adapted through new mechanisms and actors to ensure that migrants are managed in accordance with health restrictions. The lack of logistical and strategic preparation of the archipelago to respond to this event generated an institutional bricolage that has been, as I have been able to observe on the field, a source of contradictions and vulnerabilities at every level: a migrant reception system completely surpassed in terms of numbers; poor reception structures which have had to be assisted with new ones like hotels or macro camps; exhausted politicians and social workers; desperate and confused immigrants; and a polarized local population succumbing to conspirative theories and xenophobic demonstrations.

In this sense, the objective of this thesis is to analyze how the emergence of Covid-19 has led to the collapse of the fragile reception system on the Canary Islands and forced a deep

reconfiguration of the border infrastructure and policy and, as a consequence, of the collectives involved in its formal and informal functioning. The question of the impact of the pandemic on the ways in which Europe's borders are managed seems significant for two reasons. Firstly, the spread of Covid-19 vaccines does not necessarily seem to guarantee the end of the pandemic, as the tendency already shows in some countries (Genoux, 11 April 2021). Second, the fact that vaccination policies are only implemented in the most privileged countries may confer to international mobility a key role in the evolution of the health situation (Héran, 2020), as shown by the creation of the WHO *Global Program for Health and Migration* (WHO, 2020). In this sense, the analysis of the reconfiguration of the European border scenario in the Canary Islands could, through a magnifying effect, provide an illustration of the questions that the pandemic will raise in the years to come in terms of border and mobility management in Europe.

My questioning will revolve around three main axes: the transformation of a migratory event into a crisis; the responses of the different actors involved and the impact of these actions on the *borderscape* of the island; and the articulation of the migratory event with the transformation of the archipelago's political composition.

First, I will address how the migratory event in the island of Gran Canaria has been progressively enacted as a crisis. As Cuttitta explains for the island of Lampedusa, crises are usually created and "performed" through political measures and practices as a means of governing migration (2014), which allows for the implementation of further control procedures. Moreover, islands are particular places that, in relation to migration, attract extraordinary media attention (Bernardie-Tahir & Schmoll, 2014; Cuttitta, 2014) and where the reality and implications of irregular migration take exacerbated forms (Bernardie-Tahir and Schmoll, 2014), making it easier to enact migratory crises. In this sense, I suggest that the emergency measures deployed for the management of the Coronavirus pandemic in the Spanish territory have facilitated the reconfiguration of this migratory event into a crisis. It seems appropriate then to question the articulation between the pandemic and the migratory event, and the further becoming of a perceived crisis, as well as what actors are involved in this process.

Secondly, I will discuss how the reactions of the authorities and the local actors deployed in order to master the crisis have contributed to the transformation of the Canarian *borderscape*. I privilege the notion of *borderscape* over that of border because, on the

one hand, it allows me to highlight the fluid and changing nature of borders (Bernardie-Tahir & Schmoll, 2014; Brambilla, 2014) and to focus on the relations between the different collectives that compose it: the confrontations, contradictions, alliances and concessions at different levels that emerged in this changing context. On the other hand, it allows me to delocalize the border both in space and in time (Brambilla, 2015; Perera, 2007), apprehending all the actors -human or not- who intervene before in time and far in space: this is the case of the European directives and laws that have a central role in this matter in the territory of the Canary Islands.

In this sense, I will focus on how the response to the migratory "crisis" has reconfigured the relationships between the different actors present in this space, as well as on the emergence of new actors. Several authors have studied the emergence of citizen organizations and NGOs as a response to migratory urgencies (Cuttitta, 2018; Danese, 2001), however, during my fieldwork I was able to observe the emergence of private actors acquiring a central role in the reception system. In the gap generated by the lack of means of the Spanish State, owners of different hotels have managed to organize themselves in the aim of offering a dignified response to the reception urgency on the island. Other actors, already existing, have had to adjust their operating modes to adapt to the sanitary situation. I will therefore assess the changes provoked by these reactions at the level of the local collectives: the redistribution of roles, their compositions, their limits.

Finally, I will address the transformations of the political and social fabric of the island through the management of the migratory event. During my stay in Gran Canaria, I could clearly see the emergence and upsurge of a hitherto unknown xenophobic discourse as well as new practices and forms of solidarity. This allows me to posit that the migratory event goes beyond the logistical and strategic management of the phenomenon, but also impacts the political composition and the collective imaginary of a society. In this sense, I will address the reactions of the local population to the management of the migratory situation, as well as the political instrumentalization of this event by extreme right-wing political parties.

Methodology, sources and fields

This research study is the result of a two-month fieldwork conducted during January and February 2021 in the island of Gran Canaria. My study is based on three types of

materials for analysis: ethnographic work in different environments during my stay on the island, interviews with different representatives of collectives involved in the field of migration management, and press articles through which I have been able to build a chronology of events, both during my stay on the island and from a distance before and after my fieldwork. I also emphasize that my fieldwork was conducted in several languages: French, Spanish and English. In this sense, my fluency in these languages allowed me not only to access in situ information from actors coming from different geographical contexts (tourists, migrants, locals) but also to take advantage of written sources of information coming from an international level, which gives a certain richness in perspective to the information I have been able to work with.

In relation to my ethnographic work, I was able to obtain first-hand information through participant observation during my work as a volunteer in two large associations that managed two different immigrant reception centers. After a little less than two weeks on the island of Gran Canaria, I was able to start working as a volunteer Spanish teacher in one of the centers for migrant women of the White Cross Foundation[1]. This first contact with the organization allowed me, later during my stay, to visit one of the macro-camps built to respond to the migratory situation on the island, as it was managed by the same association. Some time later, I was also able to join the team of the Integral Reception Center (CAI) of Tafira, on the outskirts of the capital city of Las Palmas, managed by the Red Cross. This center, where I also worked as a Spanish teacher, welcomed families only from Morocco and Western Sahara. Both experiences were particularly enriching on a personal level, especially in relation to the interpersonal relationships I was able to establish with several of the residents. In addition, it gave me access to first-hand accounts of the different phases of the migration project of the migrants and the attention received upon arrival on the islands. It was also a very good opportunity to see from the inside how this type of temporary reception resources works at an institutional and human level.

In addition to this type of participant observation, I also employed diffuse observation, very common in anthropology, for describing on my fieldwork diary both the places and the practices that I observed within these different environments. This technique was especially useful to me during explorations in the different neighborhoods where the

[1] The White Cross Foundation is a private, non-profit organization of a foundational nature created by the Franciscan Brothers of the White Cross to coordinate their social action. Its objective is to promote the personal integration and social inclusion of vulnerable people in situations of exclusion. For more information, their website https://www.fundacioncruzblanca.org.

macro-camps had been established, and also during my various trips to the south of the island, where I focused mainly on observing the tourist structures, empty due to Covid-19, and the new shape the landscape took with the presence of the hundreds of migrants. I made most of these trips to the south of the island together with my colleague Lorena Gazzoti, form Hardvard University, who is doing her postdoctoral work on a similar topic to mine. This allowed me to have a second point of view and also to be accompanied by a more experienced researcher, from whom I could learn a lot.

Apart from the ethnographic work, I was also able to conduct a total of six interviews with different representatives of organizations and actors involved in one way or another in the management of migrant reception on the island of Gran Canaria. The access to these interviewees was relatively easy given that, as they were involved in a situation the judged as critic, they were very prone to talk about it. The issue had also been very mediatized, and the same names were coming up on the newspaper articles, which already gave me an idea of the people who were opened to talk about the situation. I carried out my first exploratory interview before leaving for my fieldwork, on October 2020, with Txema Santana, the chief of communication of the Spanish Commission for Refugee Aid (CEAR) in the Canary Islands. This first contact allowed me to have a good overview of the situation on the island before my departure. Once there, we had the chance to meet and he gave me the names of different organizations working on the reception of migrants, which is how I got my first volunteering opportunity. The rest of the interviews I conducted took place during my stay on the island and, thanks to the varied profiles of my interlocutors[2], I was able to build a fairly complete portrait of the migratory situation at that time.

During my encounters with the migrants themselves, I decided to favor an informal conversation format over that of an arranged interview as it seemed more appropriate to the context. Already during my first meeting with N., an immigrant from Mali with whom I kept, and continue to keep, contact throughout my stay, I quickly realized that I would not be able to conduct interviews as I had originally thought. Although my object of study is not the migratory path of the migrants, it seemed important to me to know their story

[2] They will all be introduced during my analysis. However, as a way of illustrating the variety of perspectives, I can briefly present their profiles. I was able to conduct interviews with a representative of the local government of the region of Las Palmas, the spokesperson of the island association for Hotels and Restaurants, the director of a federation of local African associations, the director of an NGO that works with unaccompanied minors, and a lawyer very active in the defense of human rights of the migrants.

and their way of perceiving their own situation in order to understand the Canarian migratory context in all its complexity. In this sense, given the situation in which many of them found themselves upon their arrival on the islands - confused, having lived through moments of great tension, sometimes traumatic, and very wary about the type of relationship they established - informal conversations seemed to me the best option to favor the building of a relationship of trust and also to preserve and respect the situation of vulnerability in which many of them found themselves.

The relationships I was able to establish with migrants, both inside and outside the reception structures, have been the most enriching part of my fieldwork. However, they were also the most complex: since most of the migrants I was able to talk to outside the reception centers were in difficult situations, where they felt desperate and frustrated, I quickly understood that my efforts to reach out to them could quickly turn into a relationship of dependency. If I provided my phone number for future contact, I received messages and calls at all hours. In this sense, I had to take some time to understand where and how to set the boundaries in this type of relationship. I decided, upon reflection, that I was indeed interested in establishing human relationships beyond my object of study. I did not want to simply obtain information from these people and ignore their personal situation. But to do so, I had to be quite selective in who I facilitated my personal contact to and who I did not. Thus, although my exchanges were multiple and with many different immigrants, I privileged to establish a relationship of trust with a total of four people whom I saw regularly and with whom I was also personally involved[3]. This selectivity allowed me to have privileged access to first-hand information about the situation in the different hotels and the material and psychological experiences inside them, without having to neglect the personal relationships established since I had time to answer any messages or calls.

Finally, since the beginning of October 2020 I started working on a press review with different articles published by different digital media. This allowed me to have an exhaustive chronology of all the important events that were happening as the situation evolved. It also allowed me to track the reproduction of the facts in the media, which also facilitated the identification of discourses positioned against and in favor of the migrants'

[3] By this I mean that I was available if they needed me: I could accompany them to buy clothes, help them buy a cell phone or a SIM card for their phones... On one occasion, when two of them, close friends, had been separated and sent to reception structures in different parts of the island, I accompanied one of them to visit his friend in a village one hour away by bus.

stay on the island. Working with written press in various languages (Spanish, English, French) has also allowed me to analyze how the events have been perceived in the international sphere.

Through these three sources of information, I have been able to construct my analysis of the situation in the Canary Islands before, during and after my fieldwork on the island of Gran Canaria.

Challenges during my fieldwork: reflections on gender

There is an important element that has stood out during my fieldwork that I would like to address separately because of the scarce information I have found on this topic: being a female researcher in contact with mainly men interlocutors. I will be discussing here only the part of my fieldwork related to my contact with migrants themselves outside of the reception centers in which I gave Spanish lessons.

All the migrants I was able to see and talk to, with the exception of the two centers where I worked as a volunteer, were young men. In this sense, sexist or sexualized behavior and comments were quite recurrent. Gurney describes sexual hustling to which female researchers are often exposed, as a "range from flirtatious behavior and sexually suggestive remarks to overt sexual propositioning" (1985). One of the biggest difficulties during my approach to young male migrants was the constant attempts at flirting that completely discredited the position of researcher in which I wanted to maintain myself. Usually, three reactions were possible when I approached to talk to the young men: a shy, respectful response; an attempt to approach me with compliments and questions about my personal life and asking for my phone number; or, very often, they just wanted to take pictures of or with me. The latter two reactions were quite uncomfortable and, although sexual hustling behavior is not something specific to this particular context, since I face it on my daily life, in this situation there was an added difficulty: how should I react?

Gurney points out that a "modicum of tolerance is necessary with respect to any behavior respondents may exhibit, otherwise very little field research would ever be accomplished", but "the question of where to draw the line" and how is a rather difficult one (1985). Obviously, I could not react in that context as I would react in my day-to-day life because it was in my interest to get close to these people. The ability to speak French

greatly facilitated my approach to the migrants I met on the island. As they told me, being ignored by most of the local population, if not relatively mistreated, made my approach an unusual event. This was very commonly interpreted on their part as an interest of a romantic or sexual nature. Several of the people with whom I established more solid contact explained to me that they did not understand why I was so nice to them compared to the rest of the people they met. At first, I was forced to constantly justify my kindness to them, not as a romantic interest, but simply out of respect. Questions about my marital status, if I had a boyfriend, if I was married, were a regular occurrence.

In the face of compliments and comments regarding my physical appearance, I tried to ignore them or simply smile. Little by little, I began to develop mechanisms with which I could avoid the uncomfortable questions regarding my personal life. I noticed that, as Gurney points out, "sexual hustling is more likely to occur when the female is perceived as single or unattached to a male" (1985). So, I began to reply on every occasion that I was married, which seemed to be pretext enough to combat the harassment, at least to some extent. Even so, I still had to face situations in which I found myself certainly uncomfortable. Of particular note was a moment when one of my interlocutors repeatedly tried to kiss me on the mouth, even when I made it clear that I was not at all interested. On another occasion, another person with whom I tried to establish contact insisted that he wanted to marry me, even when I told him I had a partner. Again, on these occasions, finding the right reaction was not easy and, thinking about it in perspective, I think I should have reacted more strongly. However, the situation of vulnerability in which these people found themselves also made me not want to generate further conflict with them.

Being a woman, in this context, has also been beneficial because it has made it easier for me to approach my interlocutors, even if it has generated undesired situations. It is clear that if I had been a man, I would not have had to endure many of the comments, looks or behaviors that I have had to face as a woman, but it is also likely that a male presence and an eventual approach as a man would have generated more distrust in my interlocutors. Being a young woman has been, in this sense, both an advantage and a disadvantage. In any case, learning from these experiences has definitely been very valuable and has helped me develop tools with which to face similar situations in the future.

Table of contents

This thesis consists of three parts and eight chapters. The division of the different parts corresponds to the explanatory logic that guides the analysis.

In the first part, I contextualize the convergence of the pandemic and the migratory event in the islands and question its supposed unpredictable character. I also examine the construction of this double event as a crisis and how this categorization has impacted the evolution of the different institutional emergency mechanisms developed during the last months. Finally, I establish a comparison between the migratory situation of the Canary Islands during 2020 and that of the island of Lampedusa during the same period, with the aim of contextualizing the situation of the Spanish archipelago in a broader European panorama.

In the second part of this thesis, I focus on the different phases of development and implementation of migration management and reception systems. I intend to present here the reconfiguration of the Canarian *borderscape* through the recomposition of the different collectives that constitute it. After a first moment in which the lack of means and resources on the part of the central government became evident, the latter launched the *Plan Canarias*, a road map that aimed to put an end to the emergency situation experienced up to that moment. In this sense, I focus here on the use of hotels as temporary reception centers and all their implications, and the implementation and management of the different macro-camps established on the island of Gran Canaria through this new plan.

Finally, in the third part, I focus on the implications of the new migratory infrastructure that emerges through the recomposition of the borderscape of the islands. Thus, I will analyze the new practices of this system, based on constrained mobilities and expanding temporalities for the migrants. I will also address the social and political consequences resulting from the emergency management of this double event. In this sense, I refer mainly to the increase and expansion of xenophobic discourse on the island, and the instrumentalization of this unrest by various political formations, especially of the extreme right, in order to gain political leverage.

Part I

The migratory event in the Canary Islands: an interplay of multiple scales

"We [the Canary Islands] have been absorbing all the immigration like a sponge, haven't we? We have been absorbing, absorbing, absorbing everyone, absolutely everything, without any possibility of letting them leave the islands, nor to their countries nor further into Europe. I think this situation is very atypical, isn't it? And it is very exceptional. The exceptionality is not only marked by the numbers of the arrival of 2020, but by the numbers and also the pandemic. I believe that we have to analyze everything as a whole, we have to have a vision of the whole. Otherwise, the situation cannot be understood as it is".

Iratxe Serrano,
General Director of Child and Family Protection,
Government of the Canary Islands.

The Canary Islands are an archipelago of eight different islands -Tenerife, Fuerteventura, Gran Canaria, Lanzarote, La Palma, La Gomera, El Hierro and La Graciosa- in front of the north-west coast of Africa. The distance between them and the coast of Morocco is of 95 km, compared to the 1,400 km to the closest European territory. This strategic location has given the islands relative importance as a migratory path to Europe, constituting what is called the Atlantic route. Although less known than the Mediterranean routes - from the northern coast of Morocco to the Iberian Peninsula, from North Africa to the Italian coasts and from Turkey to Greece - the Canarian itinerary has been discontinuously active since the mid-1990s.

II Situation of the Canary Islands archipelago in the Atlantic Ocean. Source: www.teletextholidays.co.uk

Traditionally and until the end of the 20th century, the Canary Islands were considered a territory of emigration. The migratory pattern of each of the islands is different depending on their position. Thus, with regard to emigration, the western islands -Tenerife, La Palma, La Gomera and El Hierro- are inscribed in a context of transoceanic emigration, mainly to Cuba and Venezuela. On the other hand, the exodus from the easternmost islands -Fuerteventura, Lanzarote and Gran Canaria- was mainly directed towards the Spanish colonies on the African coast at that time[4]. This migration from the Canary Islands to America and Africa resulted in an accumulation of capital that contributed to the economic development of the archipelago since the 1980s. From this period on, there

[4] The Spanish Protectorate of Morocco consisting of the areas of the Rif in the north and Cape Juby in the south, the current Western Sahara and the current Equatorial Guinea.

was a shift in the migratory pattern of the islands from the traditional emigration dynamic to the current migratory scheme (Ruiz, 2004).

From the 70s and 80s, the economic development of the archipelago, especially around the touristic sector, motivated the reversal in the migration pattern. The migratory transition was also reinforced by the integration of Spain into the EU (1986), which turned the islands into hubs for immigrants from the Spanish peninsula, from the member countries of the Union and also, due to their geopolitical situation in the middle of the Atlantic, from African countries. Thus, as Ruiz points out, the Canary Islands have a migratory pattern composed of two different groups: i) the so-called developed one, consisting mainly of immigrants from the developed countries of the EU, but also from the rich areas of the peninsula, who constitute a qualified workforce, entrepreneurs and even investors related to the tourism sector[5], and ii) what the author calls *third world* migration, coming especially from African countries, with Morocco in the lead, but also from Latin America (2004). It is this last migratory group that will interest us in this thesis.

The migratory flux by sea from Africa to the Canary Islands began specifically in 1994 with the arrival of the first boats from Morocco to the islands of Fuerteventura and Lanzarote (Pérez, 2011), and since then the number of boats has continued to increase gradually, peaking between 2006 and 2009 during the *cayuco* crisis[6]. In the year 2008, more than 39,000 people irregularly arrived at the archipelago by sea (Figueroa, 11 August 2014). Since then, the number of migrants arriving in the Canary Islands had decreased again considerably due to anti-immigration efforts at different levels, but also due to the loss of Spain's status as an immigration country, as it was falling into the economic crisis of 2008 (Vives, 2017). It was not until recently, during the year 2020, that this route has come back to the forefront.

[5] The Canary Islands is, after Catalonia, the second most popular autonomous community among international tourists in Spain. The tourism sector accounted for more than 40% of employment in the islands and 35% of GDP in 2018. Figures obtained from https://es.statista.com/temas/4115/el-turismo-en-canarias/.

[6] Cayuco crisis is the name that was given to the large number of arrivals between 2006-2009 due to the type of boat used by migrants from West Africa to get to the Canarian coasts. Cayucos are small fishermen boats from this region of Africa, especially Mauritania and Senegal. I will discuss this period further on in my analysis.

Chapter I: The migratory event, a predictable occurrence?

Knowing that the Atlantic migratory route of the Canary Islands was considered practically inactive for a decade, I intend to show in this section how it has been reactivated by a set of processes and political decisions taken in outside the islands. The interplay between the reinforcement of control mechanisms at Europe's externalized borders and the circumvention tactics of migrants and smuggling groups contributes to the constant readjustment of migratory routes, including this one. In fact, it is these processes combined with local reactions that trigger a new process of frontierization of the archipelago. This is a phenomenon that articulates different scales and actors and, in this sense, the situation in the Canary Islands reflects the trends and changes in the European *borderscape*.

I.I. 2020: the recovery of a historic route

The year 2020 has been marked by a significant change in migration trends and routes from northwest Africa to Spain. The first reason that comes to mind to explain this change, is the reinforcement on border controls in the central and western Mediterranean routes, and the borders of Ceuta and Melilla with Morocco. But, as Txema Santana, from the Commission for Refugees, explained to me during our interview, there is more to it:

> "In reality, the migration wave [to the Canary Islands] began in September 2019 after the Spanish government and the EU pushed for the shielding of Morocco's northern border, the access through the Strait of Gibraltar to the European Union. With that border shielded and Libya in a dire situation, migrants opted to revert to this [Canary Islands] historic route. The Canary Islands route has actually been active on a continuous basis; since the 28 August 1994, the first boat arrived and, since then, small boats have been arriving every year. Sometimes more intensively, sometimes less intensively […]. When the pandemic was declared, the number of arrivals started to be more irregular [and] suddenly, in September we received the arrival of 2,200 people, an average of 74 people a day. And in October we are now at 3,500 people[7]; it's the 20th [of October] which means that

[7] This interview was conducted on 20 October 2020. Since then, the figures have evolved considerably.

> we have an average of 170 people a day, this is quite unsustainable for an island territory. Our analysis is that, since September and October, the upturn has to do with the incorporation into the route of people who are suffering the consequences of the pandemic" (Santana, 2020).

This interview took place in October 2020, one month before the number of arrivals peaked in November. At the end of the year, a total of 23,023 people had arrived irregularly in the Canary Islands, with a concentration in the last months of the year (18,000 people from September to December) (CEAR, 2021). As Santana points out, the reasons for the increase of the arrivals through this route are multiple, and so are the profiles of migrants who took it; in fact, the route has evolved throughout the year, incorporating different channels of arrival and groups with different histories and origins that make its analysis more complex. In the first half of the year, migrants arriving at the coast came mainly from Mali, fleeing the armed conflict that has ravaged the north of the country since 2012 and which has been escalating since the coup d'état in August 2020 (CEAR, 2021). But as the year progressed, people from other origins, such as Morocco and Senegal, began to arrive, motivated by the negative impact of the pandemic on their economies. According to data from the Ministry of the Interior published by the Ombudsman, 52% of the migrants that arrived at the archipelago on 2020 come from Morocco, 20% from Senegal, 18% from Mali and a smaller proportion from Ivory Coast and Guinea Conakry, an emerging nationality in the arrivals, given the political instability in this country (Defensor del Pueblo, 2021).

After ten years of very marginal arrivals to the islands, the 2020 migratory event has once again highlighted the border nature of the Canary archipelago, placing it on the international scene as Africa's main gateway to Europe (Martín M. , 02 January 2021). This process of intermittent "borderization" is the same that Cuttitta describes in the case of Lampedusa a few years earlier (2014). As he explains, "the degree of 'borderness' of a certain place in a given historical context is" the result of its geographical location, but also "depends on political choices: policies, practices and discourses that have been developed in and around" the islands (Cuttitta, 2014). In the case of the Canary Islands, their degree of borderness was considerably increased by a series of political decisions that, far from promoting effective management, gave rise to a climate of social tension and exceptional institutional practices. As we will see in more depth in future sections, the concentration of migrants in the archipelago and the subsequent decision to prohibit

their departure from the islands, the establishment of macro-camps in the most disadvantaged neighborhoods of the capital or the overcrowding of people sleeping for months in a dock in the south of the island, contributed to raise the perception of the islands as hot-spots of the European and Spanish border, after almost ten years of apparent irrelevance. This, accompanied by a "spectacularization" (Cuttitta, 2014) of the phenomena through political and media narratives, led to an increase in social conflicts and confrontations between neighbors and migrants. I was able to see this during my stay on the island; as an example, one of my roommates showed me one day a Whatsapp group with more than 200 participants called "a cazar moros"[8] ("let's kill the arabs"). From what I could understand, several groups of people gathered in the south of the island, where most of the migrants were staying, to chase the migrants and attack them.

What is specific to the case of the Canary Islands, and hence the interest in analyzing the transformations of this border in particular, is the context of global sanitary emergency in which the arrival of these migrants took place. The Covid-19 pandemic has marked the entire migration and management process, from the departure of migrants from their countries of origin to their reception on the islands. In a climate of absolute uncertainty, the pandemic presented itself as an added obstacle that increased the complexity of the situation and favored the construction of the migratory event into a crisis. Already in October, Santana conveyed to me his concern about the uncertainty in the evolution of the migratory situation:

> "It is worrying because I have heard everywhere that we are experiencing one of the most important crises since the Second World War and, if this is true, it will have the most important consequences since the Second World War... And with this scenario, having all the routes blocked and only the Canary Islands route open forces people to take one of the riskiest journeys of all the migratory routes. Moreover, we are seeing that the objective is to lock them up in the Canary Islands, to prevent them from passing through to mainland Spain. The situation is quite uncomfortable. Europe and Spain are not understanding, or are understanding very well, that this route needs support through the evacuation of people to the mainland" (Santana, 2020).

[8] Spanish slang word refered to moor, inhabitant of the region of Magreb. It is very dismissive.

As we will see in the following sections, the convergence of several factors has made migration management in the islands challenging in different levels. If Covid-19 was a key factor in explaining the increase in migrant arrivals, it was also the main obstacle in the management of their reception, turning mobility into a sanitary matter.

I.II. The migratory *event*

I approach this sudden arrival of migrants as an Event in the sense coined by Alain Badiou, that is, as a process through which the emergence of a situation disrupts the operative modes by which we compose with our environment (2007). Badiou explains that an Event happens when "the excluded part" appears on the social scene, suddenly and drastically, thus disturbing the appearance of normality and opening up a process of reconfiguration of reality. In the context of the Canary Islands, the excluded part that has emerged suddenly on the social scene is represented by irregular migrants; as the author explains, this excluded part has no recognized identity or attributes within the situation. Furthermore, the only reason why the migrants can suddenly emerge on the social scene is because their previous exclusion prevents them to be managed well enough to foresee its sudden appearance. This is particularly true for the migratory context of the Canary Islands where, despite being a territory with a rich migratory history, there was, prior to the current situation, no adequate migration management infrastructure. It is precisely what Gabrielli refers to when he evokes "the permanent exception in Spain" (2014): despite the recurring migratory episodes on the island, there was no adequate infrastructure to respond to a "sudden arrival". In this context, the arrival of more than 20,000 migrants in only a few months, which could have been managed effectively had there been a good reception system, ended up turning into a political and social crisis.

In effect, during my fieldwork I was able to measure the extent to which the sudden arrival of the migrants in a context of pandemic challenged the operating methods of the Spanish and European authorities in terms of migration management, thus imposing a readjustment of their practices in urgency. This unpredictable event has thus given rise to confrontations, contradictions, alliances and concessions at several scales between the different actors who participate in the production of the Canarian border. In this bricolage of experiences, I have seen how the new European *borderscape* of the islands has

transformed. This is precisely what an Event, in Badiou's sense, generates: it is "akin to a rip in the fabric of being, and/or of the social order" (Badiou, 2007).

This reconfiguration was particularly visible in the reception system: in the absence of an adequate structure with capacity for the large number of people arriving to the archipelago, the authorities were forced to resort to exceptional reception resources such as tourist hotels and macro-camps. However, this migratory event has also affected the collective imaginary of the border of the Canarian society in general and the perception of migrants. In a region that claims to be the result of a mixture of nationalities, languages and races, a rejection of the Other seems to emerge for the first time, the migratory Event seems to be "traumatic for the mainstream" (Badiou, 2007). Mame Cheikh, director of the Canarian Federation of African Associations (FAAC) presented it this way during our interview:

> "The issue of [racism] has certainly increased in the media, in the public and even in the political parties. They talk a lot about this phenomenon [immigration] and even blame it. I say blame it because there is something happening here, and that something is the pandemic; whether we like it or not, it is the pandemic that is affecting everyone: not being able to leave my house, not being able to go to parties, not being able to play soccer, to train outside... I don't have my normal life, what I used to do before. So that leads to frustration and despair; and that makes people go frustrated and wanting to blame; so, then they look for the guilty party. And who is the guilty party? Well, there is a big arrival of immigrants, so it will be the immigrants" (Cheikh, 2021).

It is evident then that the migratory event has modified not only the immigration management infrastructure in the islands, but also the reality of the people who live there. As Badiou explains it, the Event "changes the structure of the situation, by forcing it to include a new element", in this case, the irregular migrants (McLaverty-Robinson, 2014).

Ultimately, an Event must always be unpredictable or hazardous. Sometimes, Badiou portrays it as "an act of creation out of nothingness (creatio ex nihilo)", and others as a kind of "structural necessity, which will happen sooner or later" (McLaverty-Robinson, 2014). Although this migratory event was entirely conceivable, and had in fact occurred in the past, it is the link between the arrival of migrants and the pandemic that had not been imagined. As I have explained above, migration in the Canary Islands is a structural

phenomenon (Gabrielli, 2015), even though it is recurrently treated as an exception by the Spanish government. In this sense, we could assume that a numerous arrival of migrants to the Canary Islands could have been predicted on the basis of previous experiences. However, the political and institutional discourse, both at the national and regional levels, is one of absolute surprise, which is why the notion of Event can apply to this situation.

There are, nonetheless, certain contradictions that cast doubt on the absolutely unpredictable nature of this Event. As a matter of fact, the increase in the Atlantic migratory route to the Canary Islands had been announced since 2019 (CEAR, 2021). The 2019 risk analysis report of FRONTEX Agency, published in February of that same year, already highlighted a significant increase in arrivals via the West African route to the Canary Islands (Frontex, 2019). In November of the same year, Carsten Simon, head of the FRONTEX Risk Analysis Unit, announced that the route was being reactivated, but was still under control (Agencia EFE, 06 November 2019). And that same year, the Spanish Embassy in Dakar also cautiously analyzed the increase in departures from the route (MacGregor, 11 June 2019). However, all the available information warning of a reactivation of the Atlantic route did not translate into the necessary structuring of an organized institutional response. When the arrivals increased drastically, the reception system in the Canary Islands was not prepared, the restrictions imposed by COVID19 and the impediment of transfers to Spanish mainland, turned an increase in arrivals into a humanitarian crisis (CEAR, 2021). This opens important questions about the political decisions behind the institutional management of the current situation.

Chapter II: Management through urgency: enacting a local crisis

Perhaps the migratory event could not have been predicted in its articulation with the health crisis, but the lack of migratory management measures in the archipelago is striking. Given its history and geographical position, one would expect the island to have a consolidated infrastructure to respond to possible increases in migrant arrivals, such as the one that occurred during the past year 2020.

In this sense, it is essential to analyze the measures taken during the last migratory “crisis” experienced on the island, the cayuco crisis between 2006 and 2009, in order to compare

the measures put in place at that time and in the current context, and try to understand the reason behind the divergences. Another important aspect is the management of the situation by the Spanish government, which seems to insist on treating the migratory phenomenon as an urgency instead of considering it as the structural phenomenon that it is. This also explains the lack of resources in the Canary Islands when the increase in arrivals began to take place: the lack of a solid and adapted reception and migration management infrastructure would respond in this case to the unwillingness to consider the migratory phenomenon in the islands as a structural phenomenon, thus always responding with temporary solutions.

In this chapter I will explore the institutional management of the cayuco crisis compared to the current one; secondly, I will analyze the migration management model of the Spanish state in relation to the Canary Islands, which will allow us to understand the constant recourse to the "crisis" as a method of management.

II.I. The migratory infrastructure since the *cayuco* crisis

The Atlantic route of the Canary Islands was considered inactive since 2009, the end of the *cayuco* crisis. During that period, in just 4 years, between 2005 and 2009, more than 50,000 people arrived by sea to the islands (Palmero, 2013). The increase on the volume of arrivals on this route from 2005 onwards was the result of a repositioning of the departure points for clandestine immigration due to the tightening of controls on previous departure points. In effect, Europe's restrictive migratory policy was one of the causes of the phenomenon of the cayuco boats: the effort to secure Europe's southern border, which includes the Spanish enclaves in North Africa, Ceuta and Melilla, led to the adoption of riskier routes.

In 2003, the Guardia Civil's Integrated External Surveillance System (SIVE) was implemented in the Strait of Gibraltar. The SIVE is an operative system directed by the Guardia Civil – the national police force- which, on the basis of technical support, provides information obtained in real time to a control center which then gives the necessary orders for the interception of any element approaching the national territory by sea. Since its deployment, boats that initially departed from northern Morocco towards the southern coast of Spain began to depart from further south, in the Western Sahara, to

the Canary Islands (Pérez, 2011). In 2005, Moroccan authorities also tightened controls in this area, causing thousands of people to attempt to cross north, through the fences that separate Morocco's land borders with the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla. The consequences were terrible and the events that took place at the fences of these two cities in 2005 shocked Spanish public opinion. Eventually, the barriers in Ceuta and Melilla were reinforced with more security and barbed wires, which had a relative impact on the amount of people trying to cross. As a result, the Canarian route came back to the frontline, this time with departure points starting even farther south, from the coast of Mauritania and then Senegal, increasing the distance and thus the level of danger. From the summer of 2006, FRONTEX began to patrol the waters of West Africa, and from that moment, departures started from even more distant coasts such as Gambia, Guinea or Cape Verde.

The *cayuco* crisis was a turning point in the perceived degree of *borderness* (Cuttitta, 2014) of the islands by Canarian society itself. As Palermo explains, it made them aware not only of their geographical condition, distinctly African, but also of being situated on a peculiar border, in one of the "sharpest cleavages between the abundance of the North and the desperation of the South" (Palermo, 2013). It was considered a real humanitarian emergency and both public and private resources were deployed to manage the situation: warehouses, police stations, sports centers, camps or airports were turned into reception areas (Vargas N. , 11 Semptember 2020). The response of the Spanish government was twofold, combining a strengthening of the country's interregional solidarity mechanisms while reinforcing the control of its external borders. On the one hand, one of the main solutions put in place by the Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs during that emergency, was the ambitious program of "humanitarian reception for migrants in vulnerable situations"[9]. This program planned a reception and transfer network throughout the different regions of Spain, based on the principle of territorial solidarity and thus avoiding turning the islands into detention points (CEAR, 2021).

On the other hand, Europe's response, at the request of the Spanish government, was the technological militarization of the Canarian border based, mainly, on sophisticated radars -sensorial, thermal and infrared- of a very expensive high technology (Palermo, 2013). With the aim of stopping illegal immigration by sea from Africa to the Canary Islands,

[9] Programa estructural de "Acogida humanitaria para personas migrantes en situación de vulnerabilidad".

FRONTEX set up in 2006 the "Hera" naval air force, which started to work in an intermittent basis. Furthermore, in October 2006, the Spanish government created the Canary Islands Regional Control Center (CCRC). Still working today, the project was an unprecedented experience in Spain and the European Union which aimed to facilitate coordination between the different national, European (FRONTEX) and local agencies that deal with immigration to European territory by sea. Its role is to coordinate the resources provided by the Spanish Ministries of Interior, Defense and Development, as well as those of the European countries participating in the mechanism (Italy and Portugal), and ships from three African countries, Mauritania, Senegal and Cape Verde (Pérez, 2011). This new unit was very effective and, in addition to return agreements with African countries and the "Hera" operation, working permanently since 2008, the arrival of immigrants was reduced by 71% during that year compared to 2006, and by 93% during 2009 (Pérez, 2011). FRONTEX's Operation Hera was suspended in 2018, when the spending allocated for the operation was deemed too high for a seemingly irrelevant migration route in terms of arrivals (IRÍDIA, 2021).

Both the Parliament of the Canary Islands and the Spanish government considered the management of the *cayuco* crisis as a success. In a report entitled *Movimientos mixtos de población y derechos humanos: una respuesta civilizada* published in 2017, the regional government assured that with the support of the Spanish government and European institutions the archipelago "was one of the first European regions that managed to design a model of governance of migratory flows that responded effectively to both the complexity of the phenomenon and the obligations that public authorities have towards the needs and rights of people" (Hernández, 06 August 2018).

In this regard, it is interesting to note that, of the migration management infrastructure that was developed during that period, there are practically no remaining instruments today. In fact, all this infrastructure comes to be very ephemeral, as less than ten years after its deployment, the financial resources allocated to these control mechanisms are very limited (Gabrielli, 2015). Some of my interlocutors in Gran Canaria explained to me that, during the years following the economic crisis of 2008, all the reception facilities that had been created were closed, thus resulting in an unstable structure that was poorly adapted to the migratory reality of the islands. The consequences were evident: on September 2019, when number of arrivals through this route began to increase, there were "only 70 reception places" (Martín M. , 07 January 2021) in the archipelago; by "January

2020, the reception network had been stretched to 900 places, but in a very short time all resources were exhausted" (ibid.). This caused crowds of more than 2,000 people in 400 m2 in the seaport of arrival in the south of the island of Gran Canaria (CEAR, 2021). Furthermore, in the current context, no interregional solidarity distribution program has been proposed by the central government, generating a situation of blockage in the islands that, as CEAR estimates in its last report, has distorted a program that had been a reference for the rest of Europe and a solution for Spain on different occasions (2021).

The case of the Canary Islands is, in this sense, "central to highlighting the shifting nature of the Spanish "borderization" process (Gabrielli, 2015). This lack of planning and coordination with regard to the increase in arrivals not only led to an inhumane treatment of migrants, but also to a constant transgression of legality, creating a space for the detention of people without any legal coverage, and, de facto, a political and social emergency. Through this process, it is evident that it is the different reactions of the actors involved to the double event of health and migration that gradually lead to the qualification of the situation as a crisis. If the decisions had been different, such as in 2008 with the political choice to refer migrants to the peninsula, the situation would have evolved differently and perhaps would not have been enacted and categorized as a crisis.

II.II. Performing the Canarian crisis: a double *event*

The articulation of a sanitary event and a migratory event in the Canary Islands have progressively caused the emergence of a crisis. The different actions and reactions of the actors involved in the current context, their different *enactments* (Mol, 2003) of the situation, have provoked the further qualification of this double event as a crisis. This has led, on certain occasions, to practices that go against the legal provisions and the rights of migrants, exposing the capacities and deficiencies of the migration infrastructure. But the crisis "does not only imply disruption and disorder, it is also productive" (Gabrielli, 2015): it has also set new conditions of possibility for the emergence of new developments in the border and migratory management.

It is likely that if there had been no Covid-19 pandemic, the management of the migratory phenomenon would have been much more agile. However, I argue that the sanitary crisis has been both an opportunity and an obstacle, a constraint and a justification, and even an

advantage or disadvantage in this sense, depending on where we put our focus on. It is true that, as Iratxe Serrano, Director General for Child and Family protection in the regional government of Gran Canaria, explained to me in our interview, Covid-19 has been an element of uncertainty that has left all the institutions without operational tools.

> "It is very difficult, especially because the pandemic makes it worse, if we didn't have a pandemic situation, it would probably be difficult, but it would certainly be much simpler [...] I think this situation is very atypical, right? And it is very exceptional. The exceptionality is not only defined by the number of arrivals in 2020, but also by the pandemic. I think we have to analyze everything as a whole otherwise the situation cannot be understood [...]. I truly believe that this is a historic moment and in 15- or 20-years' time when this is studied, I think everyone will be very surprised, because there is no precedent at all. And we don't know how to act either, because how do you act with a pandemic that not even the doctors know how to control?" (Serrano, 2021).

In effect, as it will be presented in the following sections, the pandemic has altered the arrival and reception processes, which have had to be adapted to health restrictions, as well as the material layout of the reception structures, the administrative mechanisms of return to the countries of origin and referral to the Spanish mainland, the registration and filiation processes... However, the pandemic has also been an opportunity for both migrants and institutions. First, with all borders closed, returns to countries of origin were frozen for months. None of the migrants arriving on the island could be returned and, technically, after 72 hours of detention upon arrival, they had to be released. This considerably multiplies their chances of success in their migratory journey. Moreover, from the point of view of the institutions, the lack of tourism caused by the pandemic, although very damaging to the islands' economy, has made it possible to recycle the hotels into temporary reception spaces for migrants[10]. Without these facilities available, the situation of migrants after their arrival on the islands would have been even more precarious. Finally, the emergency context generated by the sanitary crisis has made it possible to legitimize exceptional practices that, in many cases, even go against the rights of migrants as set out in the Spanish Constitution[11].

[10] This point will be developed further in the analysis (chapter V).
[11] This point will be developed further in the analysis (chapter II).

In this respect, it is interesting to explore the link between migration, crisis and exception. As Iratxe Serrano pointed out during our interview, this is an exceptional situation, not only because of the number of arrivals, but also and above all because of the pandemic. The Spanish Constitution of 1978 contemplates, in Article 116, the states of alarm, exception and siege. These three states grant exceptional powers to the civil or military authorities of Spain "when extraordinary circumstances make it impossible to maintain normality through the ordinary powers of the competent authorities"[12]. In the context of the sanitary crisis, the Spanish government declared a state of alarm on 14 March 2020, which was extended, intermittently, until 9 May 2021. This extraordinary regime provides for restrictions on the movement or stay of people, the possibility of temporary requisitions of all types of goods, restrictions on the use of services or the consumption of basic necessities, the possibility for the government to issue the necessary orders to ensure the supply of markets, etc.[13] Particularly, with regard to the pandemic, the Spanish government imposed a ban on the movement of citizens throughout the national territory and a mandatory house confinement[14]. In a state already openly declared as exceptional, the arrival of immigrants in the Canary Islands, where the lack of tourism has caused a 21% drop in regional GDP (Cerezal, 08 August 2020), was experienced as an additional emergency.

Many authors have elaborated on the use of states of emergency as a justification for legitimizing unconstitutional practices, especially against already vulnerable populations as irregular migrants (Cuttitta, 2014; Gabrielli, 2015; Bigo & Bonelli, 2018; Colombeau, 2019); Michel Troper, defines a state of emergency, in this sense, as "a situation in which, by invoking the existence of particularly dramatic exceptional circumstances and the need to address them - such as a natural disaster, war, insurrection, terrorist acts or epidemic - the application of the rules which ordinarily govern the organization and functioning of public authorities is temporarily suspended and other rules, obviously less liberal, are applied, leading to a greater concentration of power and restrictions on fundamental rights"[15] (2011). What is unique to the current context of the Canary Islands is that there

[12] "Ley Orgánica. 4/1981, de 1 de junio", Government of Spain. Retrieved from LO-4-1981-estados-alarma.pdf (defensa.gob.es)
[13] Íbid..
[14] "Real Decreto 463/2020, de 14 de marzo, por el que se declara el estado de alarma para la gestión de la situación de crisis sanitaria ocasionada por el COVID-19", Official State Gazette, Government of Spain. Retrieved from Real Decreto 463/2020, de 14 de marzo, por el que se declara el estado de alarma para la gestión de la situación de crisis sanitaria ocasionada por el COVID-19. (boe.es)
[15] My own translation.

was already a state of alarm prior to the arrival of the migrants, which has considerably facilitated the construction of the migratory crisis.

Mountz argues that states generally "develop narratives to explain and perform their day-to-day work", and that they "excel in particular at performing crises" (Mountz, 2010). This is particularly true when applied to migratory crises, as Cuttitta (2014) proves for the case of Lampedusa Island. In the case of the Canarian archipelago, the emergency context officially declared by the government due to the pandemic, contributed to the construction of the migratory event as a crisis on multiple levels. Although I will go into the detail of the exceptional practices put in place by the government to manage this "crisis" in future sections, I believe it is important to highlight a few points to exemplify the enactment of the migratory emergency.

As in the case of Lampedusa described by Cuttitta, on the island of Gran Canaria and the archipelago in general, "the migrants that had been disembarked […] were not timely transferred to the […] mainland but were kept on the island for weeks and even months" (2014). It is this particular political choice which has given the impression that the situation was out of control and has laid the groundwork for the development of a climate of emergency. In both cases, the objective of these measures has been to block immigrants on an island territory to prevent them from reaching continental Europe, here the Spanish mainland (CEAR, 2021; IRÍDIA 2020). However, in the current context of the Spanish archipelago, these measures have been much easier to justify through the health emergency. In a pandemic context, mobility has been transformed into a health issue, which has allowed to control the movements of migrants even more strictly, as it was evidenced by the ban imposed to prevent them from leaving the islands. As an article published on December 2020 explains, "although [the migrants] are free to move throughout Spanish territory as long as their return file is not executed, the Government is taking advantage of the controls linked to the pandemic to prevent the transit of people in an irregular situation who try to leave the Canary Islands" (Sánchez, 11 December 2020). The blockade situation on the islands in a context of economic and social crisis caused by the pandemic has obviously generated, as happened in Lampedusa, demonstrations against migrants, social conflicts and protests by the migrants themselves.

Moreover, the political enactment of a crisis is always accompanied by a process of discursive or symbolic construction. In this sense, the reproduction on the media of the migratory situation acquires a remarkable importance. This is what Cuttitta refers to as

"spectacularization" of the border (2014), reinforced by the rhetoric of "invasion" through which the arrival of migrants is presented. In effect, in the dynamics of the "migration spectacle", it is essential that "the representation of state action takes place in a context of high media visibility" (Gabrielli, 2015); this is the reason why sensationalist terminology, such as "migratory crisis" (Cué & Martín, 12 November 2020), "massive arrival" (Ntn24, 20 November 2020), "avalanche" (Delgado Sanz, 17 November 2020) or "border assault" (Canarias Noticias, 10 October 2020), is often used both by governmental actors and the media to define the arrival of migrants to the borders. In the case of the Canary Islands, the mediatization of the phenomenon has been very important and, to a certain extent, has contributed to the social tension in the archipelago. The images of the emergency "which have plagued the news in the islands, have shown a dehumanized collective turned into a mass whose rights have been systematically violated by the institutions, which has contributed to generate a negative image of the phenomenon. [...] If the State itself does not consider these people as subjects of rights, it may transmit to the public the erroneous idea that this is the case" (CEAR, 2021). This allows to justify the increasingly "visible deployment of means to deal with a numerically small but symbolically very impactful group of people: irregular migrants" (Gabrielli, 2015).

As Gabrielli explains, migration crises, or situations labelled as emergencies, are "an important element of Spanish migration policy"; its borders are mainly managed through a "reactive" answer by recurrent labeling of "migratory crises on certain segments of the border line" (2015). The reactive response of the Spanish authorities in migration management means that certain parts of its border, such as the Canary archipelago, are recurrently presented as scenarios of the migratory crisis; this was the case of the cayuco crisis in 2006 and is the case again in the current context. This response seems to be guided by a short-term and temporary logic, which is in line with the spectacular logic of emergency management, rather than by an overall vision of the migratory phenomenon. It is in this sense that Gabrielli highlights the contrast between "the strongly conjunctural and transitory character of the border control measures put in place by the Spanish State" (2015) and the structural nature of the migratory phenomenon on its borders. What are the reasons behind considering as "exceptional" a structural phenomenon such as irregular immigration? The labeling of "crisis" allows the Spanish government "to escape the constraints imposed by the legal regime of rights, derived both from national

legislation and from international obligations" (2015). Even more so if this occurs during an officially declared state of alarm.

Chapter III: "We don't want to become the next Lampedusa"[16]: a regional event

I have explained how, at the local level, a situation described as a crisis has progressively emerged, determining the process of migration management at the local level and this, as we will see in future sections, with serious implications. However, the migratory event in the Canary Islands and the resulting readjustments are not only local, they extend beyond these islands. The European border of the Canary Islands is an insular and fragmented territory, but it is not cut off from the rest of Europe. Indeed, the governance of the Canary Islands' borders is articulated in devices inscribed in a multiplicity of scales and entangled hierarchies (Bigo, 2014). In this respect, the Canary Islands constitute what Lussault calls a hyper-place (2017) whose hyperscalarity is defined by both tourism and migration dynamics.

In this sense, it seems important to me to establish a comparison between what happened in the Canary Islands during 2020 and the migratory dynamics of other European islands such as Lampedusa. This comparison is important because it allows us to relativize the facts based on the number of immigrants who have arrived in the archipelago and because the focal shift of the media illustrates quite clearly the processes of borderization of different enclaves of the European border at different times.

III.I. The prison islands, a tendency in the European migration policy

There is a specific geographical space where borders take a particular, more visible form: islands. These particular territories have been conceptualized as *places of condensation*, "an analogy with the condensation of water vapor: a densification process that gives visibility to that which hadn't been [visible]" (Debarbieux, 1995). Far from being isolated territories, islands are "interconnected sites subject to an articulation of geographical

[16] The comparison with what happened in other European islands and the notion of prison islands were two very recurrent elements during the conversations I was able to have with the inhabitants of the island during my fieldwork.

scales" (Bernardie-Tahir & Schmoll, 2014b) and, in this sense, they have been particularly studied in relation to the dynamics of EU border production and management. This trend is evident in the proliferation, in recent years, of studies on other European islands such as Lampedusa, Malta, Lesbos or Moria. Most of these studies focus on the islands of the Mediterranean migratory routes, but there is a clear lack of information on the Atlantic route of the Canary Islands. It is precisely this gap that this thesis aims at partially filling, by addressing the case of the Spanish archipelago.

In relation to migration, islands attract extraordinary media attention (Cuttitta, 2014) and have become places where the reality and implications of irregular migration take exacerbated forms (Bernardie-Tahir and Schmoll, 2014a). It is in this sense that multiple authors refer to these territories, the European southern islands, as *sentinel* islands (Lemaire, 2014; Bernardie-Tahir and Schmoll, 2014a; Baldacchino, 2014). These sentinel territories are then tasked with controlling migration flows like border guards "blocking immigrants' routes to Europe" (Bernardie-Tahir and Schmoll, 2014a). In the last months of the year 2020, the Canary Islands have become the new scenario for the migration containment policy on islands, a model already used in the Greek islands and which is expected to be institutionalized through the New European Pact on Migration and Asylum (European Comission, 23/09/2020).

This new pact seeks to create closed spaces at the border to determine swiftly who can be subject to international protection processes and who, not being so, will be immediately returned. It focuses on three pillars: containment on islands and decreasing the number of transfers to other European countries, compensating arrivals with systematic deportations to the countries of origin or to countries with which the European Union has signed return agreements, and the reinforcement of border control through FRONTEX and the generation of a deterrence policy to deter migrants to reach Europe (CEAR, 2021). This model of containment policy has been previously reproduced in other southern European territories such as Lesbos, Samos, Lampedusa or Ceuta and Melilla. This new pact officially institutionalizes practices that up to now had been implemented more or less informally, or in the form of exceptional measures. As it has happened before in all these places, and now in the Canary Islands, the effects of this policy go far beyond the migratory phenomenon; they actively contribute to "perform the migratory crisis" (Cuttitta, 2014). On the one hand, the islands become a place of "repeated violation of rights, where not only human rights, but also fundamental rights of the legal systems of

the host countries are transgressed" (CEAR, 2021); on the other hand, the conditions to which migrants are subjected also end up affecting the host population, generating an anti-immigration discourse and social conflict that is difficult to manage if not addressed constructively.

In this sense, the current situation in the Canary Islands corresponds to the analysis of Bernardie-Tahir and Schmoll, who point out how "the number of detention facilities located on European islands has increased considerably in the last few years, revealing a process of imprisonment as well as a geographical relegation" (2014c). Such is confirmed by the construction and installation in recent months of three macro-camps on the island of Gran Canaria alone, with an average capacity of between 500 and 1,000 people each. Paired with the prohibition for migrants to leave the archipelago, the Canarian context reproduces up to a certain extent the model of prison-islands resulting from the EU migratory trends and policies. Much as Lemaire explains in the case of Malta, "migrants live for some months in a prison-like environment, despite not being classified as having committed any crime" (Lemaire, 2015), making it impossible to continue their migratory journey.

Despite being often marginal territories on the international scene, peripheral islands "have disproportionate political roles and media coverage when it comes to migration and asylum issues" (Bernardie-Tahir & Schmoll, 2014c). This in turn contributes to increasing the degree of borderness of different parts of the European border at different moments in time. Given that "migratory trajectories to Europe are constantly reshaped according to the geography of border controls" (Bernardie-Tahir & Schmoll, 2014c), it is interesting to compare the process of borderization of the Canary Islands with respect to other European islands. It is in this relationship that we can observe the mechanisms of European border control in action.

III.II. Lampedusa 2020: the normalization of a "crisis"

In the European collective imagination, the island of Lampedusa is automatically associated with "keywords like 'irregular migration' and 'migrant boats'", and many migrants would also associate it "with the idea of a gateway to Italy and Europe" (Cuttitta, 2014). The Sicilian island became a symbol of irregular immigration to Europe in 2014

and 2015, during the refugee crisis, when more than 100,000 people arrived by sea each year (UNHCR, 2021). As Cuttitta explains, Lampedusa had long been the main site for the performance of the "border play" (2014), and that was only accentuated during this period. He coins this term to highlight the political dimension of irregular immigration to Europe, which needs to be spectacularized in order to be managed like a crisis.

However, the mediatization of immigration on the island of Lampedusa has decreased considerably over the last few years. Following the last agreement between Libya and Italy in 2017[17], the number of irregular arrivals to Italian shores was drastically reduced (UNHCR, 2021)[18]. Migration flows shift according to changes in the geography of European border control and, so does the "spotlight" (Cuttitta, 2014) of the European border play. In this sense, the Canary Islands emerged in 2020 as the new stage of European border play, making the front pages of the international press. This is evidenced by the media attention received by one of my interlocutors, Tom Smulders[19], who explained to me that "at the peak moment I covered more than 50 [newspapers], and the big ones! I did the ARTE documentary [...]. I've been with a journalist from *Der Spiegel*, the most important newspaper in Germany [...]. Also *Le Figaro, Le Monde*, all the newspapers, televisions even from Russia and all the European countries, it's been total madness" (Smulders, 2021).

However, this does not mean that other European border territories stopped receiving irregular migrants. In fact, the Sicilian coast received in 2020 a total of 34,154 migrants (ANSA, 22 January 2021), more than the total received by the 7 islands of the Canary archipelago with a total of 23,023. Furthermore, around 60% of the migrants arrived to the Sicilian coast, did it on the small island of Lampedusa (ANSA, 22 January 2021). Why, then, much of the media and political attention was directed to the Canary Islands in 2020?

As Cuttitta explains regarding the performance of the European border play, "while multiple and dispersed stages may confuse the audience, concentrating the show on a

[17] "Italy-Lybia agreement: the Memorandum text", signed on the 2/02/2017 by the National Reconciliation Government of the Libya State Fayez Mustafa Serraj, and the President of the Presidential Council for the Government of Italian Republic Paolo Gentiloni. Retrieved from ITALY-LIBYA-MEMORANDUM-02.02.2017.pdf (asgi.it).
[18] UNHCR operational data portal shows 23,370 irregular arrivals to Sicilian coasts in 2018 compared to the 119,369 registered in 2017. https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5205
[19] Tom Smulders is the spokesperson of the Federation for Hotel and Restauration Entrepreneurs of the island of Gran Canaria.

single stage makes it easier not only for the actors to play but also for the spectators to follow the performance" (2014). In other words, the Lampedusa stage, after years of continuous performance, had lost its spectacular character. When a "crisis" is prolonged for too long, it loses its dramatic nature, the crisis becomes normalized and the emergency ceases to be such. In this context, when there is a significant increase in arrivals at a different point of the border, all the mechanisms of spectacularization are centralized on this new site in order to continue conveying the narrative of the crisis.

Taking up Edelman's considerations on the symbolic function of political activities and on the "political spectacle" (Edelman, 1988), we can consider that the constant management of crises in certain segments of European borders assumes a legitimizing function for European institutions: the crisis "is a powerful contemporary political symbol", and the labeling of an event as a crisis represents "a crucial modality to ensure political consensus" (J. & Pallister-Wilkins, 2015). But for a crisis to exist, it has to be constantly vindicated and renewed. It is in this context that the Canary Islands came to represent, during the year 2020, one of the main scenarios of the European border play. As I have explained in the preceding section, the Canarian migratory crisis was politically and symbolically constructed through narratives of urgency and exceptionality, facilitated by the context of health emergency, thus turning the archipelago into the perfect scenario for the European border play. The analysis of the role of the Canary Islands as a focal point in the Spanish borderization process highlights the temporary nature of this dynamic.

III.III. The Canary Islands, the becoming of a *hyperplace*

Much like Gabrielli pointed out regarding the cayuco crisis of 2006, the Canary Islands became last year 2020 "the hot-spot of the Spanish and European border system"[20] (Gabrielli, 2015). The European border of the Canary Islands is an insular and fragmented territory whose governance is articulated around apparatuses (dispositifs) inscribed in a multiplicity of scales and entangled hierarchies (Bigo, 2014), particularly visible when being at the European border play. These scales include the local management of the

[20] My own translation.

Canary Islands regional government, the central Spanish government, European directives and control systems…

In this sense, the Canary archipelago can be understood as a "hyperplace" in the sense given by Lussault, a place with diverse spatial dynamics and a mediatized ubiquity (2017). It is a *hyperscalar* space, with a regional, national and global identity. This reality is clearly visible in the Canarian landscape and is largely represented by tourism. Particularly evident in the south of the island, the area that receives the most tourists, it is common to find the signs of local businesses in German, English or Norwegian. In the village of Arguineguín, for example, a favorite destination for Norwegian retirees, I was surprised to find many stores, bars and restaurants with names, advertisements and menus exclusively in Norwegian. In front of the beach, among the many hotels, one can even find a Norwegian church, Sjømannskirken[21]. This is also the case in the tourist town of Maspalomas, where most of the bars, restaurants and entertainment venues are in German. Although during my visits to this part of the island most of the businesses were closed due to the lack of tourism, I remember being quite surprised when looking for a place where I could drink a coffee. I entered the only open bar: it was a German bar, between a dutch one, the "Vliegende Hollander", and a Norwegian one, "Hurtigruta Norsk bar". When I wanted to communicate with the waiter, he did not speak any Spanish and I had to address him in German. This shows how the "hyperplace" of the Canary Islands is full of diverse realities and experiences that connect the archipelago with the outside world.

IV Norwegian church in the village of Arguineguín. My own photograph.

III Dutch bar in Maspalomas. My own photograph.

[21] The Norwegian Church Abroad or *The Norwegian Seamen's Church* (Sjømannskirken) is a religious organization serving Norwegians and other Scandinavians travelling abroad.

The migratory phenomenon also contributes to reinforce the islands as a "hyperplace", especially in the particular context of the absolute lack of tourism. As Lussault points out, hyper-places are either "ubiquitous and connected" or marked by the event, drama or crisis that makes them unique (2017). And in this case, it is both. Indeed, in the absence of international tourism in the context of the pandemic, it has been the arrival of migrants and the consequent borderization process, that has placed the islands in the spotlight of international media attention. If, as I strolled through Arguineguín, the apparent preponderance of the Norwegian diaspora already surprised me, the landscape increased in strangeness when mixed with the dozens of sub-Saharan and North African migrants wandering through the village. What struck me most was the double and opposite disposition of the locals to welcome certain types of foreigners.

The notion of hyperplace applied to the Canary archipelago is helpful to understand the nature of its borderscape. Apprehending the border as a relational space (Brambilla, 2015), Lussault's analysis enables us to study the mosaic of relations and multiplicity of hyperscalar trajectories that compose the Canarian borderscape. The few tourists that the islands welcomed during this period, the many migrants who arrived on the islands and managed to continue their journey, those still blocked there, the islanders divided by the migration phenomenon, the various institutional actors struggling to manage the situation; through each of their experiences, the border is differently *enacted* (Mol, 2002). As each actualization affects the others, all of them contribute at their level and scale to the reconfiguration of the European borderscape of the Canary Islands. The details of this recomposition will be presented in the following part of this thesis.

Part II
The new actors of the European *borderscape* in the Canary Islands

"As things stand, there is no one in charge here,

we are all pitching in and working together to move this forward.

The entire Canary Islands society as a whole".

Txema Santana,
Chef of Communication of CEAR,
Spanish Commission for Refugee Aid.

I have explained how the convergence of events in the islands has been enacted as a crisis at the local level, whose consequences and implications go beyond the islands themselves. The migratory event in the Canary Islands constitutes, in this sense, another example of European migration policy. Thus, the Canary Islands have become the focus of the European border spectacle during the year 2020.

In the following part, I will address the mechanisms and procedures put in place to respond to the emergency situation that gradually emerged and its implications in the reconfiguration of the collectives and the material recomposition of the border. I will privilege here the notion of "collectives" rather than that of "actors" in accordance with a relational approach. This allows me to distance myself from an overly substantialist perspective focused on individual entities or predefined structural sets. Collectives are "the effect of processes of aggregation of sequential and dynamic courses of action, whose form is determined by the articulated engagement of a multiplicity"[22] (Trom, 2010). This perspective allows me to account for the multiplicity within each of these groups. Far from representing a uniform entity, we find within them divergences and conflicts. It also allows me to take into account their fluid nature and their constant transformation and readaptation through relations with other collectives. I will continue to use the notion of actors to avoid repetition, but it will always be used in this interactional perspective.

The double migratory and sanitary event that has taken place in the Canary Islands during the last few months has rendered obsolete the operating methods of the collectives who participate in one way or another in the border management on the archipelago. But it has also opened up a new set of possibilities, allowing the different actors present in the borderscape to reconfigure themselves through alliances or tensions with other new and already existing actors. The reaction to the events taking place in the island of Gran Canaria that I will present next, such as the construction of camps or the mobilization of hotels, has led to the repositioning of actors and the reclassification of functions in the borderscape of the island.

On the one hand, there is a repositioning of the actors in relation to each other: collaborations develop between different institutions that are in fact required to participate in the regulation of the mobility of migrants on the island, such as NGOs, but

[22] My own translation.

hoteliers also become controllers with the reception and control system via bracelets. In all this improvisation, there is a repositioning of the different collectives insofar as the different groups are reassigned to different tasks in the management and reception system. On the other hand, there are also new mobilization processes that bring out new collectives: the migrants in the camps; the neighbors who live around the camps... All these repositioning of one another, added to the reorganizations of the spaces of reception, detention and control, deeply transform the materiality of the *borderscape*.

In this part of my thesis, I will focus on these reconfigurations among actors, as well as on the emergence of the new collectives and the changes on the materiality of the border. I will first present the ocurrences in the dock of Arguineguín, a space where the situation in the Canary Islands was, to a large extent, gestated and mediatized, contributing to the general perception of the situation as a "crisis".

Thereafter, I will analyze the Plan Canarias, the road map that the Spanish Government has developed to put an end to the deficient management of the migratory event made visible in the Arguineguín dock. This plan initially contemplated the use of the hotels in the south of the island, empty due to the lack of tourism because of the pandemic, as temporary reception centers; the Canary Plan thus came to institutionalize in December 2020, an initiative that had been put into practice in a marginal way by some hotels since September.

In a second stage, the plan also foresaw the construction of three macro-camps on the island of Gran Canaria which, added to three other camps in the rest of the islands, would serve as reception centers for a total of 7,000 people. The objective was to progressively transfer migrants staying in the hotels in the south to these new macro-camps. Thus, I will present in the course of my analysis the material, psychological and social implications that these different reception spaces and the implications for the island, as well as the reactions of the different collectives involved. How have these different readjustments reshaped the *bordescape*?

Chapter IV: The dock of Arguineguín, improvising a solution

The deficiency of the islands' migrant reception infrastructure, despite being a border territory where the migratory phenomenon is recurrent (Gabrielli, 2015), generated situations at the end of 2020 that have contributed to the categorization of the migratory event as a crisis. The dismantling of permanent reception resources after the *cayuco* crisis led to the overflow of the immediate reception areas where migrants were cared for after their arrival in safe harbor. In this unprecedented context of the Covid-19 pandemic, healthcare workers were present for the first time alongside the maritime rescue services, the Red Cross and the national police force, to intervene in the management of the situation. Given the constant flow of arrivals, the need to carry out PCR tests and the consequent immobilization of migrants, an atmosphere of chaos started to emerge which earned the small dock of Arguineguín, in the south of the island, where most of the migrants were taken to, the name of "dock of shame". As I will explain below, violations of constitutional and human rights became commonplace in this "space without law".

IV.I. Arguineguín's "dock of shame"

Arguineguín is a small village in the southwest of the island of Gran Canaria. It is a small fishing village with just over 2,300 inhabitants and, although it lives mainly from tourism, it is not a place with large macro hotels like other nearby towns. As one of the villagers explained to me, Arguineguín means "quiet water" in Guanche, the now extinct indigenous language from the island; however, during the last year, the waters have been anything but quiet. The small town became known during the year 2020 for being the port of the Canary Islands archipelago where most of the immigrants arrived. All boats that were rescued at sea by the maritime rescue team[23] were taken to the port of Arguineguín, which became the main reception point during the last months of last year. The images that circulated in the national and international press during October and November

[23] "Salvamento Marítimo is a Public Business Entity attached to the Ministry of Transport, Mobility and Urban Agenda, through the Directorate General of the Merchant Marine. Created in 1992 by the State Ports and Merchant Marine Law, it became operational in 1993 and its main purpose is the protection of life at sea in the area of Spanish salvage responsibility." Retrieved from their official website Salvamento Marítimo (salvamentomaritimo.es)

earned it the name “the dock of shame” (Wilkinson, 02 December 2020; Fergo & Parra, 30 November 2020; Arab News, 30 November 2020; Fergo, 30 November 2020).

At the beginning of the year 2020, when arrivals were gradually increasing, the reception of the migrants was resolved with the opening of small centers, sports fields and other facilities managed by the Spanish Red Cross. This was only possible because a lot of public structures were empty and not being used due to the lockdown that the Spanish government had imposed on the whole country during those months. Eventually, the number of arrivals started to increase exponentially, and these small resources were very quickly surpassed. The restrictions imposed by the pandemic, the lack of available facilities and the requirement to perform PCR tests prior to the entry of migrants into safe emergency humanitarian reception areas, generated in the dock of Arguineguín, a space that was initially conceived for a first care on arrival, an emergency situation. It resulted in an improvised detention camp in a total space of 400 m2, where hundreds of people were blocked already during the month of August. The place was managed by the Spanish Red Cross, FRONTEX, the National Police Corps and the Civil Guard.

V The dock of Arguineguín last november 2020. Photo by Agencia EFE retrieved from https://www.elmundo.es/espana/2020/11/17/5fb40f27fdddffc9b58b464c.html

With an initial maximum capacity of 400 people in tents arranged along the dock, it ended up accommodating more than 2,600 migrants at its peak, on November the 12th (CEAR, 2021). Both the migrants themselves and a multitude of national and international organizations denounced the deplorable conditions in which the migrants had to survive for weeks: most of them sleeping in the floor, without space for social distance, without shelter or sufficient food (IRÍDIA, 2021). From the moment people landed in the dock, they were detained by members of the National Police Corps (CNP) for identification,

health checks and filing of the return procedure. During my interview with Txema Santana, he explained the situation in the following terms:

> "The dock that is receiving more people is the Arguineguín dock, yesterday [05/11/2021] 800 people slept there. They are installed in tents separated by boat: for example, if there was a boat with 20, they put up a tent for 20 people. The PCR tests are performed there and, once the results are available, they are referred to humanitarian reception facilities. The problem is that there are no stable humanitarian reception centers in the Canary Islands despite the fact that it is a border territory. […] So, from the moment they test negative, they are supposed to be transferred to one of these places; and from then on they are a free person. They are temporarily sheltered, but they become a free person" (Santana, 2020).

We can note that Santana puts and emphasis on these migrants "becoming" free, which means they were not free while they were staying at the Arguineguín dock. In effect, even if during the first moment of arrival socio-health actors such as the Red Cross intervened, this process took place within a framework of restriction of freedom of movement. This has been extremely problematic at multiple levels.

Detention conditions

The lack of organized reception facilities, as well as the obligation to carry out quarantines due to Covid-19, led to situations in which migrants were deprived of their freedom of movement for indeterminate periods of time. Daniel Arencibia, the lawyer to whom I was able to speak, explained to me that migrants can only be detained for up to 72 hours during which the procedures of registration and identification as well as all the health tests are carried out. After this delay, migrants must either be detained in an immigration detention facility or be released. But due to the exceptional sanitary situation in regard to the pandemic, all detention centers for immigrants had been closed in Spain (Martín M. , 06 May 2020). The government had decided to close these structures because their only purpose is to host immigrants until they are returned to their countries. With the closure of international borders, all returning procedures came to a halt and therefore detention centers lost their sole purpose. At the end of the year 2020, the detention centers on the Canary Islands were reopened, but their capacity stayed very limited. As Santana explained to me in our interview:

> "Right now, there are no detention centers. There are two open, but only one is admitting people. There are 21 people on this center right now and the judge who controls it is not going to admit more than 40 people [due to Covid-19 restrictions]. That is to say, you can have the bad luck of arriving and be put in a detention center to be returned to your country if there is a free place. It can happen, but the probability is very low. To me, this arbitrariness also seems to be a tremendous vulnerability. You don't know what can happen to you in this emergency system that has been created here" (Santana, 2020).

Multiple sources from civil society and civil institutions, and even the Control Judge of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria himself, collected testimonies of people who had been held for more than three weeks at the dock in a situation of deprivation of liberty without any legal protection, transgressing a fundamental right, set forth in Article 17 of the Spanish Constitution (Right to liberty and security) (Defensor del Pueblo, 2021).

Poor conditions

There is an obvious contradiction between the situation that occurred at the Arguineguín dock and the alleged reason given by the authorities to justify it. The main explanation offered by the authorities about the situation at the Arguineguín dock was that the migrants could not be referred to other resources without a PCR test. The reality is that the situation itself at the dock did not respect any of the sanitary restrictions imposed in the rest of the Spanish territory.

Several international organizations have repeatedly warned about the poor management of migrants held at the Arguineguín dock. Doctors of the World (MdM) explained in a report published on November 2020 that the conditions on the dock "do not meet the minimum standards of dignity and safety, putting [migrants'] health at serious risk. At the peak of the second wave of covid-19, the overcrowded situation in which the migrants find themselves - around 75 people share a tent with a maximum capacity of 30 - makes it impossible to maintain even basic safety conditions to avoid contagion"[24] (Médicos del Mundo, 2020). Furthermore, the organization has also warned about the lack of health assistance, hygiene and adequate food; they explained that some people have spent up to 10 days without being able to shower and wearing the same clothes provided at the time

[24] My own translation.

of their arrival, and the water provisions are 15 liters of water for every 86 people (Médicos del Mundo, 2020).

Likewise, the Ombudsman's own report highlights that the bathrooms were insufficient and there was no access to drinking water (Defensor del Pueblo, 2021). Many of the people were barefoot, others with shoes in poor condition and the clothes they wore were dirty. He highlighted the serious health risks to which the migrants were exposed since several people with positive COVID tests had been re-admitted to the facilities, after hospital discharge, and were without any separation from the rest. It was also found that at least 80 people with positive PCR remained on the dock (Defensor del Pueblo, 2021). These observations were confirmed by the examining magistrate who assured that in the Arguineguín dock there were flagrant violations of Article 15 of the Spanish Constitution[25] as well as Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which prohibits torture or degrading or inhuman treatment (CEAR, 2021).

Lack of legal assistance

In addition to illegal detentions and poor sanitary conditions, the management of migrants at the Arguineguín dock failed to comply with multiple legal provisions applicable to migrants arriving irregularly on Spanish territory, as lawyer Daniel Arencibia explained to me during our conversation. He particularly highlighted the lack of legal assistance for all migrants who arrived in Arguineguín, leaving thousands of them unprotected in the exercise of their rights.

Legal assistance is key in the management of newly arrived immigrants, which makes its non-compliance a major violation of migrants' rights. Lawyer Daniel Arencibia explained to me that each migrant has the right to have a meeting with his or her lawyer within 72 hours after their arrival. However, this was not respected in any of the cases of the migrants at the Arguineguín dock. Claiming that mandatory sanitary measures were not respected at the dock, the lawyers were summoned 4 km from the place, at the nearest police station. Since the migrants could not leave the dock and the lawyers could not enter due to sanitary restrictions, there was no possibility for them to meet. People in Arguineguín were detained for the purpose of identification and determination of their legal status, so knowing their rights is key to identifying possible solutions to their

[25] The art.15. of the Spanish constitution protects the "right to life, to physical and moral integrity without in any case being subjected to torture or inhuman or degrading punishment or treatment". My own translation.

situation. In addition, legal assistance allows for early detection of people in situations of special vulnerability or applicants for international protection, and this information allows migrants to determine the legal path they want to opt for depending on their situation.

Legal assistance is a right included in article 17.3 of the Constitution and is thus a fundamental right. The 12th of November, the General Council of Lawyers denounced the lack of legal assistance and on November 14th, the Bar Association of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria issued a statement in which they expressed the difficulties in providing legal assistance and demanded the need to create minimum security conditions to carry out their job (Ilustre Colegio de Abogados de Las Palmas, 2020). However, as CEAR points out in their report, in the following weeks the assistance continued to be deficient: provided in groups of more than 15 people, which were later reduced to groups of 7, without the presence of translators or interpreters who could explain in the migrants' native language their situation and the rights to which they were entitled (2021).

As the Ombudsman's report points out, during the four months that the camp remained on the dock, there were systematic failures in the identification of profiles susceptible to special protection: unaccompanied minors, potential applicants for international protection, victims of trafficking, people with disabilities (Defensor del Pueblo, 2021). A particularly striking example of this deficient legal assistance is the case of a 17 year-old who spent 9 days on the Arguineguín dock in these conditions without been identified by any of the institutional actors present as an unaccompanied minor (Perdomo, 02 Noviembre 2020). After his identification and hospitalization, Abián Montesdeoca, pediatrician of the health service of the Canary Islands, explained that the young man suffered physical and psychological after-effects of the boat journey in which 16 of his fellow passengers died, including all his cousins[26] (Perdomo, 02 Noviembre 2020).

IV. II. The dock of Arguineguín: a "space without law"

For all the above reasons, we can say that the Arguineguín dock, the "dock of shame", constitutes what Agamben conceives as a "space without law" (Agamben, 2005). The

[26] The doctor added that they found the young man "in a corner, on the asphalt, under a Red Cross tent, dehydrated, on the verge of shock. He spent 9 days there, someone had to feed and hydrate him, because for sure he couldn't even move. He could have died, in the crowd, like a dog." My own translation.

author uses this expression to refer to the state of exception, a resort often used by modern states in situations of extreme necessity to contour the legal order. The extreme necessity is presented here by the health emergency created by the Covid-19 pandemic which, with the unexpected arrival of thousands of migrants, would have been enacted as an even more urgent scenario. Agamben explains that, in the state of exception, the juridical order is suspended and thus emerges a space where law does not apply. We can apply this notion to the Arguineguín dock because, as we have seen, the legal order is not respected, neither from a constitutional point of view, nor the human rights of the migrants who are detained.

In the process of dismissal of law justified by the situation of emergency, Agamben points out the emergence of the "camp" as "the space that is opened when the state of exception becomes the rule" (Agamben, 1998). The camp then becomes a figure of the state of exception in modernity, "an apparently anodyne place", such as the Arguineguín dock, in which, "for all intents and purposes, the normal rule of law is suspended and in which the fact that atrocities may or may not be committed does not depend on law but rather on the civility and ethical sense of the police that act temporarily as sovereign" (Agamben, 2000). In the camp, the citizen disappears into what he calls a "bare life" (Agamben, 1998), that is, stripped of political and legal attributes. This is also true for the migrants on the dock of Arguineguín who have no legal status and are deprived of any right.

Only if one considers the Arguineguín dock as a space without law can one understand the statements of the Ministry of the Interior and the National Police Corps, who claimed that the situation on the dock was justified because it was "an exceptional circumstance" (IRÍDIA, 2021). Although this rights-infringing situation was initially denied by the Minister of the Interior (Canarias Ahora, 16 November 2020), the Covid-19 pandemic was later used as the main explanation to justify it, claiming that there were people who had to maintain quarantine measures (IRÍDIA, 2021). However, we know that not all immigrants were obliged to quarantine, and this would not justify their illegal detention at the Arguineguín dock. In this context, the "dock of shame" can be defined, as well as a space without law, as a detention center: the people inside were deprived of their liberty and legal rights, and the access to the dock, as the movements inside it, were controlled and had to be authorized by police agents (IRÍDIA, 2021).

In this state of exception without judicial order, the decisions taken do not comply with the law, and arbitrariness takes exacerbated forms. This is shown by the events of 16 November 2020 when the National Police Corps gave the order to expel 180 people from

the Arguineguín dock, but without giving them an alternative, without assigning them a new reception resource and leaving them without any means of survival (Vargas N. G., 17 November 2020). To all intents and purposes, 180 people were put on the streets and left to their own luck. The town council of Mogán, the municipality to which the village of Arguineguín belongs, provided these people with three buses to the island's capital. The almost 200 people spent the night on the streets, in a central square in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. The Unified Police Union argued that "migrants cannot be put on the streets without any kind of accommodation or food. This measure will generate social rejection and increase xenophobia" (Vargas N. G., 17 November 2020)[27]. Eventually, these migrants were relocated in reception structures in the capital city but, as predicted by the Police Union, social rejection and xenophobia did increase, both in the capital and in the small village of Arguineguín.

When talking to the locals, I repeatedly came across discourses that evoked the migratory situation on the island as an *invasion.* I especially remember the owner of a bar where I had a coffee, right in front of the port of Arguineguín, when it was already empty. He explained to me that, at a given moment, more than 2,600 people were sleeping on the dock in front of his bar, and that they were only 2,300 neighbors in the village. "We were outnumbered at that point" [28], he said. He told me that they obviously had sympathy for them, that this was no way to be treated, but that they did not understand why this had to happen in their own village. In Arguineguín, he told me, they live mainly from tourism, and everyone was very worried about the fact that the situation might deter the few tourists who were planning to come during the season. Eventually, the neighbors gathered themselves through a Neighborhood Platform and, mainly through social media, organized marches and demonstrations against the "occupation" of their dock. "I believe that our village does not deserve this. Our patience has reached its limit. Everyone to the dock!"[29], was one of the messages I could read back then on the Facebook page of the Arguineguín Platform.

[27] My own translation.
[28] Information from my fieldwork notes.
[29] "Creo que nuestro pueblo no se merece esto. Nuestra paciencia ha llegado al límite. Todos para el muelle", Plataforma Vecinal de Arguineguín on Facebook on the 17/11/2020. Reterieved from https://www.facebook.com/page/100332078543386/search/?q=Creo%20que%20nuestro%20pueblo%20no%20se%20merece%20esto.%20Nuestra%20paciencia%20ha%20llegado%20al%20l%C3%ADmite.%20Todos%20para%20el%20muelle

Finally, under pressure from various actors - civil society, local residents, international organizations, lawyers and judges, NGOs - the central government provided a solution to the situation and promised to empty the Arguineguín dock on the 16th of December 2020 (CEAR, 2020). The Ministry of the Interior announced that the dock in Arguineguín would be cleared and the Ministry of Social Security, Inclusion and Migration presented what would become known as the *Plan Canarias*: a roadmap for the creation of camps and emergency resources with a total of 7,000 reception places to help relocate the migrants on the different islands.

IV.III. From *dock of shame* to *camp of shame*: Barranco Seco

The new solution to accommodate the migrants during the first hours after their arrival was to build a new camp that would serve as a police station and control and test center for Covid-19: the Temporary Emergency Care Center (CATE) in Barranco Seco. The creation of this facility constitutes the first implementation of such a resource on the island. CATE resources were created "in 2018 for the initial detention of migrants arriving by informal and unsafe maritime routes to Spanish territory" (IRÍDIA, 2020). The first CATE was opened in Cadiz (Andalusia) in 2018 following several scandals arising from the fact that the Ministry of Interior "was using sports facilities and sports centers for the detention of people after their arrival on Spanish shores" (IRÍDIA, 2018). It is remarkable the fact that in the entire archipelago of the Canary Islands, despite being an insular territory, close to the African continent and with a migratory history of recurrent urgencies, there was not yet such a facility. With this new structure, the participation of the Canarian health service and the national police corps became de facto institutionalized in the island's migration infrastructure. The new facilities thus played a considerable role in the recomposition of the Canarian borderscape.

Directed by the Ministry of the Interior, this center consists on a set of tents with a capacity to accommodate almost 1,000 people. It is located on a site owned by the Ministry of Defense on the outskirts of the city of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria and near the Barranco Seco Detention Center (CIE) -closed during the pandemic-. This structure is directly managed by the National Police Corps and depends on the police station. It replaces police station lock-ups, as they are not considered suitable places for this type of

detention, and it is designed to assist migrants during the first 72 hours after their arrival. These facilities were put into operation on the 19th of November (IRÍDIA, 2020), before the Plan Canarias was even announced; indeed, the Minister of the Interior, F. Grande-Marlaska, on the occasion of his visit to the Canary Islands, together with the European Commissioner for the Interior, Ilva Johansson, on November 6th, already announced the imminent closure of the Arguineguín dock (EFE, 06 November 2020), which was not empty until mid-December.

VI Tents in the camp of Barranco Seco. Photograph by Alejandro Ramos. Photograph retrieved from El Diario.

VII Image from the inside of the tents in Barranco Seco. Photograph by Agencia EFE retrieved from El Diario.

In contrast to the Arguineguín dock, this camp was completely kept away from the public eye. As a detention center, the movements of detainees must be authorized and/or supervised by the custodial officers, and access to the center is guarded by police agents (IRÍDIA, 2020). Journalists or researchers were also not allowed to get in, formally due to a "risk of contagion". I tried to visit the place on several occasions, but the access was completely troubling: not only does it not appear on the maps, since it was a military site with a certain level of secrecy; it is also in the middle of a place where there are no proper roads or clean access.

The CATE of Barranco Seco consists on several large military tents, separated according to the boats on which the migrants have arrived. The Government Delegation in the Canary Islands has informed that this temporary camp is intended to become a semi-permanent facility to be used as a temporary attention center, and the General Directorate of the Police has already started the necessary conditioning works, which will last until the month of June 2021 (Defensor del Pueblo, 2020). In this sense, the material situation has improved with respect to the conditions at the Arguineguín dock where migrants were

sleeping on the floor. As the CEAR report points out, the setting up of these facilities, despite the precariousness of their infrastructure, has meant a substantial improvement in the care process after arrival (2021) in terms of legal assistance and sanitary attention. Upon their arrival to the center, the migrants get tested for Covid and their personal data gets registered. They also receive automatically, all of them, a refoulment agreement where they are assigned a NIE (Foreigner Identification Number) which eventually allows them to do some procedures like buying a SIM card for their phones or get inscribed in a school if they are minors. As Daniel Arencibia explained to me during our conversation, once in Barranco Seco, if no one has tested positive to Covid-19, all the identified unaccompanied minors and other vulnerable individuals are taken to specific host reception centers; the rest of them are transferred to other temporary centers all over the islands. In case one or more of them are diagnosed with Covid-19, the positive cases are taken in charge by the Canarian Health System and all the contact cases are quarantined in this same space in Barranco Seco or in other prepared structures.

Despite the substantial improvement in detention conditions, various organizations, including the Ombudsman, have denounced the precariousness of the infrastructure and the lack of respect for various legal provisions. The material conditions of the tents in which the migrants are housed for allegedly 72 hours have been the subject of controversy. Several testimonies from people who have stayed in the facilities evoked the precarious situation: “it seems like we are in a prison: we can't go out, we can't shower or clean our teeth”, it’s “very, very, very cold” because the tent has holes and when it rains “water comes in and everything gets wet. We are really having a hard time” (Reguera Plaza, 13 January 2021)[30]. Other sources state that in the facility “no hot food is served, the immigrants cannot shower regularly, it is very cold and humid and it is, according to all sources consulted, an inadequate place for sanitary isolation” (Martín M. , 15 January 2021)[31].

Moreover, as was the case in Arguineguín, further testimonies indicate that migrants are exceeding the 72-hour stay in the CATE of Barranco Seco and, therefore, the maximum legal period of detention is being exceeded (Defensor del Pueblo, 2020; IRÍDIA, 2020). One of the migrants interviewed by the journalsits, stated that they had been given “a paper that said [they] had to be here for 72 hours at the most”, but he had been there “for

[30] My own translation.
[31] My own translation.

16 days, and others for 14, 10, a week...” (Reguera Plaza, 13 January 2021)[32]. Again, the justifications given by the Ministry of the Interior and the police for this situation revolved around the sanitary situation due to Covid-19. Although those infected with coronavirus were transferred to nearby hospitals, those who were close contacts often spent the 10-day quarantine in the camp itself for lack of other facilities. As indicated in the IRÍDIA report, it should be stressed that combining a situation of detention with a measure of sanitary confinement in the same detention center could be contrary to legality and generates an unprecedented situation of “flexible detention beyond 72 hours without any type of judicial authorization” (2020). This type of argument shows how the sanitary situation continued to serve as a justification for practices contrary to what is stipulated by law. The pandemic should not serve as an excuse but, rather, should be all the more reason to ensure that health conditions were optimal.

These are the reasons why several media and activists have called this center the new “camp of shame” (Morollón, 17 January 2021; Sánchez, 20 January 2021) that would replace the improvised dock of shame in Arguineguín. With testimonies of migrants who could not take a shower for 11 days even though they had “urinated on themselves in the boat” (Sánchez, 20 January 2021) or volunteer doctors confirming the degree of dirtiness of the camp, with remains of food, garbage or even vomit on the floor of the tents (Morollón, 17 January 2021), the new institutional response to manage the migratory emergency did not seem to get off to a good start.

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The visit of the Ombudsman and the public denunciations of national and international organizations about the reception conditions in the Arguineguín dock, as well as the growing political and social discontent awakened by the situation, provoked the reaction of the Government, which officially announced on December 16th the closure of the aforementioned dock and the launching of a new reception plan: the “Plan Canarias”. This document, of which only a series of 25 slides have been publicly released (Gobierno de España: Ministerio de Inclusión, Seguridad Social y Migraciones, 2020), consists of the creation of camps and emergency resources with 7,000 accommodation places which, over the course of 2021, are intended to become permanent temporary reception centers, with a stable capacity for 6,450 people. The plan reflects an integrated inter-ministerial

[32] My own translation.

response which, as CEAR points out, is based exclusively on the emergency - for a phenomenon that is structural in nature- providing accommodation and food for the migrants (2021). It is based on a blocking and refoulment policy, contemplating exclusively the transfer to mainland Spain of people who are susceptible to protection due to their particularly vulnerable profiles (potential applicants for international protection, women with children, people with disabilities...).

The deployment of the Plan Canarias, which contemplated the preparation of 7,000 reception places in the archipelago, was a challenge at every level: a logistical challenge, to prepare in a short period of time spaces that did not have the previous conditions to do so; a challenge of management and organization, which involves the deployment of the necessary equipment and means to manage the camps by the different organizations; and a social and political challenge, to manage the future of migrants and the social cohesion and coexistence in the reception areas. The Plan Canarias has been the political program that has institutionalized the recomposition of the collectives present in the Canary Islands *borderscape*.

Chapter V: Recycling structures: the new "reception hotels"

After the "dock of shame" disaster and in the face of the lack, still at that time, of available reception resources new alliances were established between the central government and the different administrative bodies of the island with a somewhat unexpected partner: the big hotels, mostly in the south of the island, empty due to the lack of tourism. In this way, structures that usually have nothing to do with the migration management system became a key element in this new reception network.

In this chapter, I will address this original and transitional solution and its social and political implications. Indeed, although the lack of tourism was due to the restrictions imposed in favor of the pandemic, the stay of irregular immigrants in four- and five-star hotels left no one indifferent. I will first present the process by which the hotels became temporary reception centers. In a second stage, I will deal with the material and psychological conditions that came to characterize the stay of migrants in hotels. Finally, it will be a question of whether this new measure was an opportunity for all parties involved or a source of conflict, or rather both.

V.I. From tourism hubs to reception centers: a humanitarian response or a financial opportunity?

Probably the most striking element in this recomposition of the actors of migration management in the Canary Islands is that of the hotels. With one of the richest hotel fabrics in Spain and an average of 12 million tourists per year, the Canary Islands are the one of the preferred winter destinations for European tourists, especially retirees. The island of Gran Canaria in particular has a total of 89 hotel complexes, making a sum of 36,000 hotel beds (Díaz, 1 March 2021). Normally, the busiest months for tourists are the winter months -December, January, February and March- (Domínguez Mujica, 2008) during which the archipelago enjoys temperatures of around 22ºC. My fieldwork coincided precisely with these dates, January and February, which allowed me to observe firsthand the situation of tourism in this unprecedented context of pandemic.

The effects of the pandemic and the consequent closure of most borders in Europe have had a direct impact on the islands' touristic sector. In Gran Canaria, the tourism and hostelry sector represent "35% or 40% of the direct economic indicators" of the island, but indirectly, they represent "practically 80% or 90%" (Smulders, 2021)[33]. During 2020, due to the pandemic, the archipelago registered only 4.5 million tourists (Díaz, 1 March 2021), a 63% drop from the average of 12 million per year. The consequences for the region's economy of the decline of this key sector have been disastrous, with a 21% drop in the archipelago's GDP (Cerezal, 08 August 2020)[34]. During my interview with Tom Smulders, spokesman for the Federation of Hostelry and Tourism Entrepreneurs of the island of Gran Canaria (FEHT), he evoked the situation in the following terms:

> "I arrived here in 1976, and, currently, this is the worst situation ever. At this moment, the south of Gran Canaria has a real tourist occupation that does not even reach 5% of its capacity, when it should be now 90% or more; that is to say, this is an unprecedented economic drama" (Smulders, 2021).

Most of the hotels on the island of Gran Canaria are located in the south of the island. During my trips to this area, it was particularly striking to see the huge hotel structures,

[33] My own translation.
[34] Data from the 6th of August, 2020.

which would otherwise have been full of tourists, completely empty. Many of the towns in the south are in fact conceived by and for tourists, and when there are none, everything is empty. Even the beaches were practically deserted. It was therefore all the more surprising to see, instead of the typical German, English or French tourists one might expect, hundreds of sub-Saharan and North African migrants. When I arrived on the island, I knew that many of the migrants had been moved to hotels in the south, but even so, the atypical scenario surprised me: it seemed that they did not belong to that setting of opulence and luxury because, a priori, it is not what we are used to seeing.

In the context of absence of tourism and the lack of reception structures on the island to respond to the number of arrivals of migrants, hotels appeared as a dignified and safe alternative to temporarily accommodate migrants. The transfer of migrants to hotels in the south of the island began in September 2020, when the first hotel, the VistaFlor hotel in the touristic area of Maspalomas, signed an agreement with the government to open its doors temporarily to migrants who had not been able to find a place in the islands' regional reception system (Vega, 21 September 2020). This was even months before reaching the emergency situation that was experienced from October onwards and during which a total of 17 hotels started to host migrants only in the island of Gran Canaria (Vega, 21 Semptember 2020; Smulders, 2021), with a total of 7,700 people placed on this type of structures (CEAR, 2020). The hotels were institutionalized as official actors in the temporary reception of migrants when they were included in the Canary Islands Plan published by the ministry on November the 20th.

As Tom Smulders explained to me, this situation was the result of a joint action between the local and national institutions, the hotels and the NGOs that would be in charge of managing them.

> "The call for help was launched by the regional government delegation, and then we [the FEHT] sent a letter to the hotels, but it was already circulating in the press that there was an urgent need for help. Then a report was created by the pioneer, the VistaFlor Hotel [...]. This report was presented to the Red Cross and to the delegation [of the regional government], and the Ministry of Immigration and Social Affairs looked at it very favorably [...]; this whole plan was presented, and then in Madrid they said: *if we had to do it now, we wouldn't have done it any better*" (Smulders, 2020).

It was the public administrations that asked the hotels for help, but it was the hotel owners themselves, together with the FEHT, who created the roadmaps to adapt their structures to this new objective. This is an example of the alliance dynamics, institutionalized through agreements, that arise during the process of recomposition of the different collectives present on the island. In this case, the hoteliers from the south, who are not normally involved in the island's migration management, find themselves at the center of the new reception system. Through their participation, the borderscape collectives are recomposed and the very border of the Canary Islands takes on new forms.

V.II. The *gilded cages*: Material conditions and psychological experiences in the hotels

As Tom Smulders told me, "it has been the industry model that has had to change the way they do things to suit the type of customer or guest they had" (Smulders, 2021). He explained to me that the selected hotels had to meet a series of material conditions to be able to host migrants: to be on the outskirts, not in the center of the community, to have a large capacity with large common spaces, and to never "ever, ever, ever, ever, but never" mix tourists and migrants (Smulders, 2021). During their stay in the hotels, the migrants did not have access to the recreational areas such as the swimming pool, the gym or the hot tub. Smulders also explained to me that certain services had been reinforced: the televisions in the rooms had been enhanced with new channels so that they could have access to TV channels in their own language, the wi-fi coverage was reinforced and considered an essential first necessity, the meals were adapted to the preferences or customs of the different countries... His discourse is that of a businessman proud of his work. During our interview, he evoked several times the humanitarian nature of the action these hotels were carrying out. He told me that the hotels' response was intended to provide "a temporary, controlled, humanitarian service" that would avoid "a humanitarian drama" such as the one "we have seen in areas like Lesbos, Lampedusa, even in France and other European countries" where reception is carried out in a "dire, inhumane way", a "dramatic situation, which [they] wanted to avoid at all costs" (Smulders, 2021). The descriptions of the migrants themselves, however, differed quite a bit from what he described to me.

From what I could understand during my exchanges with the migrants, they were generally divided into groups of three or four per room. The hotels were managed by different NGOs, mostly the Red Cross, and security was provided by the private company EULEN[35]. As far as I could see, there were several security guards at the doors – and sometimes rooftops - of each hotel who controlled the movements of the migrants. Evidently, only migrants and the staff of the association that managed the hotel were allowed to enter and, when I approached to speak to one of the security guards, they did not seem too pleased with my presence. Migrants staying in each of the hotels were identified by a bracelet with the name of the hotel and a number individually assigned to each of them. This bracelet, and the number, was very important because without it they could not enter the hotel; N., a Malian young man with whom I talked regularly, had learned it by heart, as if it were his new name. These are the bracelets that tourists wear when they come to hotels on vacation, they usually mean that the person has "all-inclusive"; although this was far from being the case for the migrants.

Another recurring characteristic of the hotels used for this purpose was their remoteness with respect to the center of town. Except in the tourist village of Maspalomas, where the town has been created around the hotels, in the rest of the places I was able to visit, the hotels where the migrants were staying were far away from the stores and other services. In the case of Arguineguín, where N. was staying, his hotel was about 20 minutes from the center of town. For Puerto Rico, another nearby tourist locality, the hotels were on the hillside, more than a 30-minute walk from the beach and difficult to reach on foot. This strategy of placing migrants away from the most visible parts of the village, confirmed by Smulders himself, corresponds to a desire to make their presence invisible and preserve a sense of normality.

During my multiple visits to the south of the island, I was able to follow the trajectory of several young men who were staying in different hotels. N. explained to me that after the first 14 days he spent in the hotel, during which he underwent a preventive quarantine, he was free to enter and leave the hotel whenever he wanted. He was staying in Arguineguín village, in the Arguineguín Park hotel, which belongs to the Servatur hotel chain, like many of the hotels used for this purpose. He told me that they did not have much to do.

[35] This company has a history of profiting from working in detention centers for migrants, especially in Ceuta and Melilla. For more details, consult Lethbridge, J. (2017) "Privatisation of Migration & Refugee Services & Other Forms of State Disengagement", European Public Services Union PSI-EPSU Privatisation of Migration & Refugee Services_EN.pdf.

When they arrived, nobody had explained to them what the following steps were, nor how long they would have to stay in that place. The only thing they could do, he told me, was to watch TV in the hotel, but it was in Spanish and he did not understand it. N. tried to go out every day to get some fresh air because, he told me, in the hotel with nothing to do he "thought too much". He insisted that he really wanted to learn Spanish and, although he had been asking for a notebook and pen for months to the Red Cross, who was in charge of that particular hotel, no one had provided him with anything. He was clearly disappointed because he thought that, once there, someone would tell him how to get a job, but now he felt stuck and had nothing to do.

IX Migrants staying in the Arguineguín Park Hotel, in the village of Arguineguín. My own photograph.

VIII Migrants staying in the hotel Servatur Waikiki in Maspalomas. My own photograph.

When I wandered around Arguineguín or other areas in the south of the island, the panorama was quite strange: it had a dystopian feel to it, with all the stores and restaurants closed and most of the macro-hotels empty. The only people to be seen, in abundant groups, were the migrants staying in the hotels. All of them were wearing the same clothes, a tracksuit outfit they were given upon arrival, which made them easy to identify. They were sitting on the benches, along the beach, looking out to the ocean with nothing else to do. They were usually divided by country and did not gather together unless it was to play soccer on the beach when the sun began to set.

Many people might think, and in fact did think, that for them to be there was a luxury, that they probably felt like they were on vacation. In reality, when I talked to them, what I mainly saw was frustration and tiredness. Moreover, I soon realized that the apparent freedom that migrants enjoyed in the hotel structures was not such. If they left the hotel for more than 72 hours, they were not able to not return. An article in El País tells the

story of Y., a young Moroccan man of 23 who was staying at the Arguineguín Park Hotel. He tried to leave the islands by his own means via the island of Lanzarote. Finding it impossible to leave the archipelago and without any money left, he decided to return to Gran Canaria but, having been absent for more than 3 days, he was unable to re-enter the hotel. That night he slept in a van, but many end up sleeping in the street (Martín M. , 25 January 2021).

This apparent freedom that migrants supposedly enjoyed in the hotels, actually translated into a limbo of uncertainty and despair, and a severely restricted mobility. As I will explain further on, the impression that migrants were "on vacation" and were treated better than the island's own neighbors were widespread and generated much of the social unrest that later translated into a social movement against migrants. But the facts easily contradict this perception: not only did they not have access to the recreational parts of the hotels, as many hoaxes circulating on the Internet claimed, but also, although they could leave the hotels, they had nowhere to go because they were in tourist areas where everything was closed. Moreover, if they left the structure for more than 3 days, they were expelled. I consider thus appropriate to compare the hotels in which the migrants were held to *gilded cages*: a place where someone appears to live in luxury but where they have very little freedom.

V.III. Reception hotels: a win-win situation or source of conflicts?

The opening of the hotels in the south as temporary reception structures was not only an opportunity for the regional institutions that had access to available and already prepared facilities to compensate for the lack of reception structures on the island, but it was also an opportunity for the hoteliers themselves. As Tom Smulders put it during our interview:

> "For the people who opened the doors of their hotels to the call for help from the Government Delegation, it was a well-considered decision where two people were saved from drowning: the migrant, who did not drown on the way but arrived here and he had no decent place to stay, and [for the hoteliers themselves, who thought] 'this way I can avoid going bankrupt in two months (because that was the situation) and save a lot of jobs'" (Smulders, 2021).

Indeed, the government paid the owners of these hotels a total of 45 euros per migrant per day. As Tom explained to me, this money was used by the hoteliers to hire the staff needed to run the center (cleaners, laundry services, maintenance) and to contract catering. The profit, as he said, was very limited because the 45 euros barely covered the expenses. This delegation of services by the state to private structures and companies designed for another purpose exemplifies what B. Hibou, building on Weber's work, identifies as institutional "discharge" (Hibou, 1999). As she explains, "the dominant governmentality is increasingly done through indirect interventions and through private actors"[36] (1999). In the case of the Canary Islands, this recourse to private intermediaries was due to an obvious lack of public resources, or as Hibou puts it "a mismatch between increasing demands and limited capacity on the part of the State to respond in an institutional and formalized manner" (1999). This discharge, "does not necessarily mean the loss of control of state power" (Hibou, 1999), but it is obviously not without consequences.

Apart from the social problems derived from the tensions between neighbors and migrants, which I will discuss later, one of the elements that had the greatest impact on this situation was the lack of tourism. The solution of the "reception hotels" was of a temporary nature, initially supposed to last until December the 31st, 2020 (Martín M. , 07 January 2021). The construction of the macro-camps contemplated in the Plan Canarias was expected to be completed by December 31, thus allowing the evacuation of migrants from the hotels to these new reception facilities. However, it was not until mid-January that the first migrants were moved from the hotels to one of these macro-camps (Canarias7, 15 January 2021) and, only at the end of March 2021, could all the hotels be emptied (Vargas N. , 19 Marzo 2021). As early as January, the extension of this period began to cause problems. Hotel representatives (FEHT) as well as owners and mayors of the municipalities began to protest and mobilize against the presence of migrants in the hotels. During my interview with the spokesman of the FFEHT, he told me that already at the beginning of January they had published a statement urging the central government to evacuate the migrants from their structures. The main reason, as he himself stated, was the fear that the situation would be unreasonably prolonged and affect potential tourism:

> "[…] we have said from the beginning that it is something temporary, that it cannot be extended to infinity. [We want] to give a clear signal to the central

[36] My own translation.

> government and to the European institutions that we cannot let the main industry of the island go bankrupt… Because, imagine, if in future months these people are still staying here, it is incompatible with tourism" (Smulders, 2021).

The reason for the extension of this period was the delay in the construction of the reception facilities by the government. Initially scheduled for the end of the year, "the heavy rains that made the work difficult in some muddy areas, the holidays of the workers and the negotiation of contracts with the organizations that will be responsible for the centers" (Martín M. , 07 January 2021)[37] meant that the first of the facilities was not ready until the end of January. Since the initial contracts signed with the hotels expired on December 31, many of them were forced to renew them as of January. The extension of the contracts by the central government created a conflict with the municipal government of Mogán, to which all the tourist towns in the south belong (Maspalomas, Arguineguín, Puerto Rico). On January 12, the mayor of the municipality threatened 10 of the 11 hotels in the area that were used for the reception of migrants and that still housed people; the City Council "gave the owner of the hotels a period of ten days to resolve the situation and, once this period had expired, those who did not do so would be fined between 6,001 and 150,000 euros" (P., 12 January 2021).

These institutional dynamics exemplify well the alliances and conflicts generated by the management of the migratory event on the island of Gran Canaria. While the central government agreed with the managers of the different hotels and various NGOs to seek viable alternatives to the reception of migrants, the municipality of Mogán as well as some of the local residents were against this measure. Moreover, this panorama completely changes the aspect of the Canarian borderscape, which now also includes tourist areas and hotel complexes, multiplying the relationships and modifying the experiences that compose it. The presence of hundreds of migrants in the resorts, empty of tourists, completely changes the nature of this part of the Canarian borderscape.

[37] My own translation.

Chapter VI. The macro-camps: crystallizing the emergency

In addition to the recycling of existing structures such as hotels and their transformation into temporary reception structures, the Canary Plan also contemplated the creation of three macro-camps on the island of Gran Canaria. During the whole process, from their construction to their routine use, these new structures were the object of controversy due to their material conditions and the practices used inside them.

In this chapter I will discuss the different elements that marked the process of implementation and use of these macro-centers. First of all, I will present the general conditions of the structures and then I will deal with the different conflicts and controversies to which they were subjected. Thus, I will first address the problems that arose inside these sites due to the poor conditions of the facilities as well as the strategies of protest and resistance of the migrants. Finally, I will focus on the problems that arose outside these spaces, mainly due to their location in the most marginalized neighborhoods of the capital.

VI.I. Macrocamps: a late and badly adapted solution

The Plan Canarias envisaged the construction of a total of 6 macro-camps[38] in the archipelago, three of them on the island of Gran Canaria: the Canarias 50, with an initial capacity of 650; the Colegio León, with a capacity for 300 people; and a warehouse ceded by the Spanish Bank Bankia, with 500 places (Gobierno de España: Ministerio de Inclusión, Seguridad Social y Migraciones, 2020). All of them were located in the capital city of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, or in suburbs on the outskirts. The Colegio León camp, which I had the opportunity to visit, is located in the facilities of a former school in the neighborhood of El Lasso and is managed by the Franciscan foundation White Cross, with whom I had the opportunity to work in another of their centers. The Canarias 50, managed by the Red Cross, is located on the site of a former military base in the neighborhood of La Isleta. Finally, the Bankia building is located in the industrial park of El Sebadal and is also managed by the White Cross foundation.

[38] Some official sources count 7 macro-camps, including the previously presented Barranco Seco Attention Center (CATE), which I will not be including in this section since it is *de facto* a police facility and not a temporary camp for migrants.

These new camps were conceived with the idea of progressively emptying all the hotels on the island and placing the migrants in these new structures. As lawyer Daniel Arencibia explained to me, the intention behind the creation of these facilities was to eventually leave on the island all those people who were to be deported at a later date, i.e., who were not considered vulnerable or candidates for asylum. However, with deportations very limited and some of the countries of origin still reluctant to resume deportation agreements, the stay of people in these centers seems to be lengthening uncertainly. The financing of these constructions was provided by two types of European funds, 43 million euros from the EMAS funds and 41 million euros from the EU recovery fund (Gobierno de España: Ministerio de Inclusión, Seguridad Social y Migraciones, 2020). Together with the rest of the places planned by the Plan Canarias on two other islands of the archipelago, Tenerife (two camps) and Fuerteventura (one camp), it would amount to a total of 7,000 places. However, as CEAR's report points out, on February the 11th, 2021, there were 10,718 migrants in reception spaces in the Canary Islands, 7,700 still in hotels, and most of the reception places in the different macro-camps were already full. In this sense, the reception places planned by the Plan Canarias had a deficit of more than 3,000 places, without taking into account the fact that new arrivals were still taking place (2021).

In addition, the deployment and implementation of Plan Canarias in relation to the macro camps represented a challenge at multiple levels. The first camps to be set up, Colegio León and Canarias 50, have had several problems linked to infrastructures, that were undersized in almost all aspects: limitations in the electrical installation (which in some cases did not allow residents' cell phones to be charged), water and sanitation problems and basic habitability problems caused by the precariousness of the tents deployed (CEAR, 2021). The management of the camps has also been complex, especially in relation to the expectations of migrants and citizens in the neighborhoods where these structures are located. The urgency with which the camps have been set up has meant that the organizations in charge of managing them have not had time to develop a necessary community work that would facilitate coexistence between migrants and the residents of these areas (IRÍDIA, 2020). As we will see below, most of the camps are located in places with high levels of social exclusion, where successive crises have left a situation of extreme vulnerability.

The strategy of the macro-camps clearly exemplifies the will of the Spanish government and the European institutions to make migrants stay on the islands. Apart from being an emergency reception device adapted to the current situation, the Spanish government intends to consolidate through the Plan Canarias a total of 6,450 permanent reception places on the archipelago (Gobierno de España: Ministerio de Inclusión, Seguridad Social y Migraciones, 2020). The objective, as stated in the Canary Islands Plan published by the government, is to eventually increase the capacity of the macro-camps with more solid and better adapted infrastructures in order to generate permanent places. Thus, on the island of Gran Canaria, the camp in Colegio León would go from 300 emergency reception places to 400 permanent places; the Canarias 50 would go from 650 places to 1,150 permanent places; and the Bankia building would maintain its 500 places. Without the prospect of continuing their migratory route and without the possibility of integrating into the host society, migrants are condemned to the chronification of their situation in the archipelago. As pointed out by the Commission, in this sense, the Plan Canarias would mean a deployment of a larger number of stable reception places in the archipelago alone than there are in the whole Spanish peninsula (CEAR, 2021), which shows the precariousness of the program.

Officially, it has been said that these macro-camps are not detention centers as migrants are free to come and go as they please and even to leave them. However, this is in contradiction with the fact that, until last April 14, migrants were not allowed to leave the islands (Vargas N. , 14 April 2021). Moreover, if any of them decides not to be transferred to the macro-camp to which they are assigned, they are left on the street without any resources (Vega, 25 February 2021). Faced with the impossibility of leaving the island and the only alternative of sleeping in the street, these macro-camps have become *de facto* detention centers, institutionalizing the chronification of immigration on the islands.

The macro-camps in the Canary archipelago, and on the island of Gran Canaria in particular, are what Michel Agier refers to as screening centers, “camps located right on the borders that serve as sluices to regulate the traffic of different categories of migrants and refugees, whom they are supposed to channel, detain or redirect” (2010). The main characteristic of these structures is the forced immobilization, the containment of migrants who are not allowed to go elsewhere. In the case of the Canarian macro-camps, even if the population inside is technically allowed to leave the camp, their supposed freedom is limited by the impossibility of leaving the island and the alternative of living

on the street. In this sense, these migrants are "locked out" in "floating bits of space" which are these islands, stuck in a "heterotopian realm" (Foucault in Agier, 2010) between two elsewheres. Insularity is used in this context as a locking out or isolation tool, in which containment becomes a "localized form of expulsion" (Agier, 2010) or a "way of drawing the border between the inside and outside of a nation-state" (Butler & Spivak, 2007). But this forced immobilization does not go without resistances, tensions and conflicts, as it becomes evident by looking into the Canarian macro-camps.

VII.II. Problems within the camps: precarity and resistances

I will focus here on the analysis of two of the three macro-camps whose construction was envisaged in the island of Gran Canaria by the Plan Canarias: the Canarias 50 and the Colegio León. The third one, located in the Bankia industrial building, was not operational when I was on the island for my research, so I have not had the opportunity to see where it was located or what it looked like. Both centers were the subject of several controversies during my stay on the island, mainly in relation to their material conditions. In addition to the delay in their construction, the facilities at both camps, run by the Red Cross and the White Cross, lacked the necessary equipment.

The Canarias 50 is a camp located on an old military site belonging to the Ministry of Defense, in the popular and industrial neighborhood of La Isleta in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. Access is forbidden to anyone external to the center and it is not even allowed to film it from the adjacent buildings (Yáñez Illescas, 26 February 2021). Being located in a former military base, the entire enclosure is surrounded by a high wall that does not allow to see what is inside. In this sense, the secrecy is absolute, and only if you pass in front of the gate at the exact moment when it opens, you can see part of what is inside. This is why it is difficult to know exactly the conditions and characteristics of the camp.

The infrastructure consists of a series of tents, at least 20, arranged next to each other along the ground, directly on the asphalt. Inside the tents, which can accommodate an average of 15 to 20 people, there are military bunk beds in which the migrants sleep. There are also portable toilets and sinks in the asphalt corridors, although the number is unknown. Migrants are free to leave and enter the camp between 8 a.m. and 10 p.m., and they receive three meals each day. However, the material conditions of this center were the subject of great controversy at the beginning of February. Migrants complained repeatedly about the lack of heating system, the bad conditions of the beds and the lack

of enough water to shower (López FrÍas, 06 February 2021). During a week of tropical rains, several videos were posted on Facebook by the migrants themselves showing the tents flooded by rainwater (EFE, 08 February 2021). A few days later, images were leaked of a fecal water that crossed the facilities and had gotten into several of the tents where the migrants spend the night (EFE, 08 February 2021). On top of this, there is also the state of absolute uncertainty in which these migrants find themselves, as they do not know how long they will have to stay there, especially knowing that these facilities are of a permanent nature. Several organizations and lawyers continue to insist that legal assistance at the center is very limited and that there is a lack of interpreters for migrants to properly understand their situation and rights (Yáñez Illescas, 26 February 2021).

X Reception camp in the old military site of Canarias 50, in the neighborhood of La Isleta. Photo by Javier Bauluz retrieved from El País.

The controversies also extend to the camp at the Colegio León. With a capacity for 300 people, it is located in the facilities of a former school in El Lasso, a low-income neighborhood in the southern area of the capital. Colegio León closed its doors as an educational center in July 2019 after finding that damage to the roof caused by torrential rains on the rooftop led to some insecurity (Maldita Explica, 24 March 2021). During 2020, the City Council then transferred these facilities to the Government Delegation in the Canary Islands to house immigrants after the spike in the arrival during the COVID-19 pandemic. I had the opportunity to visit this same center last February with its director, a worker of the Cruz Blanca organization with which I collaborated in another center during my stay on the island. As in Canarias 50, the facilities are guarded by security agents at each door and inside the center itself. Immigrants are also free to come and go

between 8 a.m. and 10 p.m. and receive three meals a day on site. All the migrants in this center were Maghrebi men, I did not see any sub-Saharan Africans.

In this case, the facilities are much more visible as they are located in a low area of the neighborhood, visible from the surrounding road. It was originally planned that the migrants would be housed in tents along the grounds outside the school building. When I visited the center, there were a total of 11 outdoor tents, accommodating an average of 20 people per tent, also in military-style beds. There was also a large tent where meals were prepared and served. However, the initial plan to limit the reception space to the outside of the center had to be revised and, at the time of my visit, the inside of the building was also being used as reception space. The camp director explained to me that the facilities of the old school were in very bad condition, that there is a lot to be fixed and that, in the future, the intention is to establish a permanent camp without the tents outside, only with the facilities of the old building. Upon entering the old school, there were several common areas: one where Spanish courses were held, another area with tables and chairs, and also the offices of the school administrators. On the other floors were the old classrooms, which now housed military-style beds like the ones outside, with a capacity of between 20 and 40 people per room. There were many empty spaces that could be put to much better use if there were sofas, chairs or tables around which migrants could gather. They had two large spaces for prayer and part of the second floor was dedicated to quarantine for potential Covid-19 cases. The old toilets were not being used because, as the director explained to me, they were not prepared for continuous use by so many people and, after several weeks of use, they had flooded. The current bathrooms and showers were located in a building separate from the main structure.

XI The camp at Colegio León, in the neighborhood of El Lasso. Photo by Alejandro Ramos retrieved from El Diario.

I was also able to talk to a security guard who explained that the atmosphere was usually relatively calm. However, some of the migrants had been on the island for months when I visited the center and the worker explained that they were becoming desperate. He told me that some of them had tried to sneak onto trucks that travel to the mainland by boat in order to leave the island, but they were always intercepted first. He also explained that some of them had been here for several months and have now a girlfriend from the neighborhood, so sometimes they did not come to sleep to the center. This surprised me because it exemplifies very well the chronification of the situation: they have been stuck in the same place for so many months that they can establish romantic relationships with the neighbors in the area. They also explained to me that sometimes there are problems because many of them, having nothing to do, spend their time drinking during the day and eventually, inebriated, they generate conflicts. The director of the center himself told me that this seemed normal to him, that we could not blame them for this because in their absolute desperation he believed that he would do the same.

As Michel Agier points out, in this context of uncertainty and forced containment, "a high degree of social tension pervades all the detention centers and shelters" (2010): as it was the case in these camps, "acts of revolt – riots, hunger strikes, arson – regularly occur in most of these facilities in protest against the conditions in which they are detained and kept waiting" (Agier, 2010). Indeed, both at Canarias 50 and at Colegio León, the detained migrants organized themselves in different ways to protest the situation. On February 6th, migrants from both the Colegio León and the Canarias 50 camp began a hunger strike to protest against the forced containment in which they had been stuck for months (López Frías, 06 February 2021; D. R. A., 07 February 2021). They wanted to make visible and denounce their lockout on the island, the uncertainty of their situation, as well as the xenophobic attacks they had suffered from neighbors, as we will see in the next section, and the bad conditions in the camps. They also organized protests with banners reading "death is better than refoulement", "we are immigrants not criminals" (D. R. A., 07 February 2021), "Europe or death" and "the Canary Islands are a prison for immigrants" (Martín M. , 08 January 2021). The situation was so desperate for some of them that many had decided that they wanted to return to Morocco. As one of the young men explained in an interview, there are "people who want to go back to Morocco, because they have been here for four or five months and have not yet been able to leave.

It is normal to think about going back. There are people who have lost patience and want to go back to Morocco, this is not life" (EFE, 09 February 2021)[39]. He also insisted that they did not come here to return to Morocco, but to complete the journey to Spain: "we paid a lot of money to get here, not to go back to Morocco. I am afraid to go back, I never want to go back. I don't want anything from Morocco"[40] (EFE, 09 February 2021).

The desperation expressed by these people is the result of the blocking strategy that the European institutions and the Spanish government are implementing in the Canary Islands archipelago. The objective, as the lawyer Daniel Arencibia explained to me, is to leave all those people who are going to be deported on the islands, waiting to be able to return them. In this sense, all vulnerable people, women and children, will eventually be transferred to the peninsula. This leaves all men at a disadvantage, especially if they come from North African countries or Senegal. In general, people from these origins are not considered vulnerable population or candidates for asylum, but simply economic migrants, which does not guarantee them international protection. As one of the Moroccan men staying in the Canarias 50 put it, "the unaccompanied minors are taken elsewhere. The women are allowed to continue on their way to Europe. The Africans [sub-Saharan Africans] too. But us, the Moroccans, are kept here in a prison"[41] (López Frías, 06 February 2021). This feeling of injustice generates tensions and conflicts that also result in clashes with the local population.

VII.III. Problems outside the camps: prosecution and supports

The problems arising inside the camps due to their material conditions and the psychological experiences they induce are not the only drawbacks that these structures have provoked. Their problematic location, in already marginalized and under-resourced neighborhoods, has not helped either the integration of the migrants staying there or the social cohesion between neighbors and newcomers. Many media already speak of a clear increase of xenophobia in the Canary Islands, as a result of the breeding ground that mixes irregular immigration and economic and sanitary crisis (Jiménez, 03 January 2021; Público, 04 February 2021; Vega, 2 November 2020). As CEAR points out, the urgency

[39] My own translation.
[40] My own translation.
[41] My own translation.

with which these camps have been set up has prevented the organizations in charge of managing them from having time to develop an in-depth community work process that would facilitate coexistence between migrants and neighbors in these areas (2021). Most of the camps are located in places with high levels of social exclusion, where successive crises have left a situation of extreme vulnerability.

The Canarias 50 camp is located in the neighborhood of La Isleta, on the peninsula of La Isleta. It is a popular neighborhood of fishermen and working-class people, mainly employed in the nearby Port of La Luz. Above the port facilities and in the eastern part of the neighborhood, is located the industrial area of El Sebadal, with companies mainly linked to port services, distribution centers, media, warehouses, etc., making it the largest industrial area of the city. It is between the neighborhood and this industrial area that the Canarias 50 camp is located. During my visits to this part of the city, I could easily appreciate that this was a neighborhood with low resources: many of the buildings were not in good condition, almost all the businesses looked like they had been closed for a long time and there was not a lot of people on the streets. The few people I could see in the vicinity of the camp were migrants sitting in a nearby park or sitting on benches in one of the squares. There are not many places nearby to spend time and the most dynamic nearby area is more than a 30-minute walk away.

According to the data from Caritas[42], La Isleta is the area of Gran Canaria where the association has carried out the most interventions, a total of 489, most of them related to housing. The area has suffered from years of problems of poor housing, lack of education services and conflicts with the City Council. Some of the streets are completely deteriorated, there are prostitution networks and an important problem of drug addiction (Vargas & Hernández, 07 February 2021). The neighborhood currently hosts two of the three macro camps for the reception of migrants on the island, the Canarias 50 and the one located in an industrial building of Bankia, which has added social pressure and tensions in an area where social problems were already abundant. This is the reason why, after the announcement of the arrival of migrants to the neighborhood, several protests were organized by neighbors of the area to denounce the situation. The neighborhood association of La Isleta organized on the 30th of January 2021 a protest with banners that read “it is not immigration; it is an invasion” (Vargas & Hernández, 07 February 2021).

[42] Caritas is the Catholic Church's official organization in Spain for charity and social relief.

This type of demonstration is not the first to take place on the island where, since the end of last year, there has been an upsurge of social movements against migrants.

The Colegio León camp is located in the neighborhood of El Lasso, in the south of the city, far from the city center. It is a neighborhood that is at a higher altitude than the rest of the city. In fact, the city of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria is built on two levels: the higher neighborhoods are usually the most disadvantaged from a socioeconomic point of view. To get to the neighborhood of El Lasso, on each of the two visits I carried out, I had to take two different buses. On arriving at the neighborhood, before starting to walk uphill, there is a specialized care center for profoundly mentally handicapped people (CAMP), which I found striking because of its location in such an isolated place, far away from the rest of the social and health services. To access the Colegio León camp and the core of the neighborhood, one has to walk up a large hill around which there is absolutely nothing. After 10 minutes, you reach the entrance to the camp, but the residential buildings themselves are even higher. A total of more than 26 buildings of social housing preside over the neighborhood from the heights, all identical and numbered.

In addition to its isolation and its disadvantaged socioeconomic profile, as evidenced by the presence of social housing, the neighborhood lacks cultural and commercial facilities, and the park areas for recreation and social gatherings are very deficient, if not almost non-existent (Younis Hernández, 2013). The El Lasso neighborhood also had around 80% unemployment in 2016 (Jerez, 15 Enero 2016) and is the second neighborhood in the city with the lowest per capita income index (Ayuntamiento de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, 2020). In this context, the only school in the neighborhood, Colegio León, closed its doors in 2019 due to problems related to the infrastructure, thus forcing all the children in the neighborhood to move to other centers further away. This already caused tensions at the time (Maldita Explica, 24 March 2021) and with the announcement last year that the facilities would be permanently used for the reception of migrants, the discomfort among the neighbors increased considerably.

In a neighborhood that already feels abandoned by the city administration, they have received the decision to place migrants in this area as an attack. Already on October 9, when the Minister of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration visited the facilities to verify that they met the necessary conditions to serve as a reception center, neighbors protested by shouting “We don't want blacks here!” (Vargas & A., 07 February 2021). Months later, words turned into actions, and demonstrations as well as threats and

aggressions against migrants became habitual. In February, the situation was already very tense and the center's administrators were forced to advise the migrants not to leave the facilities (Vargas Martín, 02 February 2021). The White Cross Foundation denounced in that period that seven Moroccan migrants between 18 and 45 years of age had been assaulted, one of them requiring hospitalization due to the seriousness of his injuries (Rodriguez, 2021). The coordinator of the foundation's humanitarian aid centers explained that "three boys [had] head injuries from stones thrown from outside the center. When they go for a walk, there are groups of neighbors who attack or insult them. A few days ago, three young men who were walking in the neighborhood were stopped in the street and beaten up" [43] (Vargas Martín, 02 February 2021). Moreover, during my visit to the center with the director, he explained to me that during the first months they were under constant surveillance: both the media and the neighbors were watching them every day to take advantage of the slightest conflict that took place in the center and use it as a justification to defame the migrants. Specifically, he explained to me that one night one of them had arrived drunk and had not been allowed to enter the facility; when the man insisted, his fellow residents began to argue with him to tell him to stop making noise and not to cause trouble. He explained to me that, the next day, a famous television program had published images of what had happened, talking about it as if it had been a big fight between drunk immigrants.

Despite this, things seemed to have gradually calmed down. The center's migrants, tired of being defamed and having a bad reputation, decided to work to clean up the areas surrounding the camp, tidy up the slopes around the neighborhood and plant vegetable gardens inside the camp site (Marimón, 16 February 2021). With this, they wanted to show the neighbors and the Canarian population in general that they were not conflictive, thus facilitating their integration into the neighborhood. From what the director of the center told me, it seems that this had worked and many of the neighbors had applauded them and had approached them to thank them for the gesture. This shows that, with a better intervention of local institutions and a work of preparation and social cohesion, many of the tensions and conflicts could have been reduced, if not avoided.

Once again, it is the reactions of the different collectives that participate in the management of this border and the way in which they actualize the migratory event that

[43] My own translation.

shape the situation. If the institutions had done previous work with the communities, perhaps the rejection and xenophobic demonstrations in these neighborhoods would have been less marked and the character of social “crisis” less evident. In the same way, it is clear that migrants also try to act accordingly and modify, through their own action, the nature of the situation nature. The migratory event in the islands is not a static phenomenon, but each of the experiences that shape it makes it evolve in different ways.

Part III

The implications of the new migratory infrastructure: emerging practices and discourses

"What is happening now with racism in this island makes me feel ashamed. And I think there is a political story behind it. The migrants are still people. The borders are here; they are here and that's it. We have to take care of these people, whether they are adults or minors, they are already here, we have to assist them... Then politicians can fight in the government if they disagree with how things are managed, but the migrants are here. What do you do? Do you leave them in the street? Do you just leave them without any future expectations? Or do you take them and send them back in the boat and let them return to their countries? It doesn't make sense, you know?"

Nely Suárez,
Director of Nuevo Mundo,
NGO in charge of several reception centers for unaccompanied minors.

The recomposition of the groups involved in the Canarian borderscape has given rise to a new migratory infrastructure characterized by particular control and circumventions practices and also emerging ideas and discourses. According to B. Larkin, infrastructures "networks constructed [by identified actors] to facilitate the flows of goods, people, or ideas and allow for their exchange over space. They shape the nature of a network, its speed and direction of movement, its temporalities and its vulnerability to breakdown. They constitute the architecture of circulation, literally providing the foundation of modern societies, and they generate the ambient environment of everyday life" (2013). In this sense, the current migratory infrastructure in the Canary Islands is constituted by the alliance relations and conflicts between the different collectives that form it. The infrastructure is characterized by its fluidity, it is constantly under construction and evolves when the relationships and flows that compose it do.

The concept of infrastructure allows me to consider in a complex way the process of regulation of mobility and the presence of migrants in the Canary Islands. Indeed, the evolution of the migration control policies deployed in the archipelago must be understood as an effect of the government's reactions to the local population and the press; however, the regulation of migrants' mobilities -their relationship to time and their presence in the local space, as well as their modes of circulation- is linked to these policies combined with the practices of mediation and assistance developed by lawyers, associations and informal actors. The use of the concept of infrastructure makes it possible to go beyond a strictly institutional approach to the collectives involved in the circulation and regulation of migrants' mobility. Emphasizing the assembly of heterogeneous elements, it allows us to consider both formal and informal actors, with changing contours.

Furthermore, the current context in the archipelago also shows how much the management of the presence and movement of migrants escapes the local authorities. The disastrous nature of the situation has given rise to numerous protests from part of the local population, which have been taken up by the extreme right. These changes in the attitudes of the local population have a recursive effect on the reactions of the local authorities and their political choices, as well as on the local populations in their relations with migrants.

In this last part of my thesis, I will explain the different practices, discourses and behaviors to which this infrastructure has given rise, as well as its evolutions.

Chapitre VII. Controls and circumventions

VII.I. Constrained (im)mobilities

The new practices that have emerged through this new migratory infrastructure resulting from the reconfiguration of the Canarian *borderscape* have been conditioned by the migration control tactics imposed by European and Spanish institutions; the institutional guidelines were aimed at the blocking of migrants in the archipelago for their subsequent deportation, mainly in the different macro-structures that have been built. These practices have been evolving and readapting as the situation progressed according to the decisions taken by each of the actors involved in the process. In this sense, the change of strategy on the part of the central government has been quite clear and can be divided into three distinct phases: a first moment until December the 10th 2020 in which the migrants had relative freedom to leave the island, a second moment of total lockout on the islands, and a last phase, from April 2021, in which a judge considers that the lockout on the islands goes against the provisions of the law, which makes it easier for migrants to be able to leave.

On November the 6th, Spanish Minister of the Interior, Fernando Grande-Marlaska, and European Commissioner for Home Affairs, Yvla Johansson, visited the islands to see firsthand the extent to which the situation in the archipelago was untenable. During a press conference together with the president of the Canary Islands, Ángel Víctor Torres, they publicly stated the urgency of the situation on the archipelago, and especially on the Arguineguín dock (Rodríguez N. , 07 November 2020). However, they made it clear that there would be no transfers to the mainland, and Johansson explained that "people who do not need international protection, economic migrants, should be returned to their countries" (Martín, Cué, & Vega, 20 November 2020). Spain has been confronted to is its inability to return to their countries all the irregular immigrants it receives. Indeed, while the European Union and other member countries such as France, which absorbs a significant volume of the people who enter Spanish territory irregularly, are pressuring Spain to stop the transit through the continent of migrants arriving on the islands, the Spanish government is divided. Since early 2020, both ministries involved in migration management, the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration, differ on the roadmap to follow: the latter is in favor of a significant transfer

of migrants to the mainland to avoid the blockade on the island. However, the Ministry of the Interior refuses on the grounds that "it would have a pull effect and Europe would not tolerate it" (Martín, Cué, & Vega, 20 November 2020).

In the face of these official positions of different members of the institutions, the transfers to Spanish mainland were managed with almost total opacity. From the beginning, marginal transfers of people considered to be in a situation of vulnerability were favored. I was able to see this for myself during my stay on the island of Gran Canaria. Since mid-January I was working as a volunteer in a center for migrant women of the White Cross foundation. By the end of my stay, at the end of February, all the women who were there at the beginning had already been transferred to the mainland. Secrecy and discretion were quite apparent: every time I asked if one of the women was going to leave and when, the information I received was very limited and always accompanied by "we can't talk about that yet". As of December 11th, the number of official transfers organized by the government was 2,035 according to official sources (CEAR, 2021; EFE, 04 February 2021), and on December 4th, another 1,000 transfers were approved, mainly concerning women with children, which were to take place over the next few months (EFE, 04 February 2021).

Initially, parallel to these official transfers, thousands of immigrants left the islands by their own means until December the 10th (Alamillos, 24 November 2020; Martín & Saiz, 09 December 2020). Daniel Arencibia explained to me that by mid-December, about half of the immigrants who had arrived on the islands during 2020 had been able to leave: some in official organized transfers, and others, the most part, by their own means (Arencibia, 2021). The latter group was mainly constituted by Moroccan migrants who arrived on the islands with their passports and simply bought a ticket to the mainland. Images began to circulate of migrants on flights from the Canary Islands to the Spanish capital or other major cities, and rumors began to spread that it was the government that was secretly carrying out these transfers, while officially saying that only vulnerable people would be transferred.

The main controversy was sparked by images published on social media on December the 10th showing a group of Moroccan migrants arriving by plane to the city of Granada, in Andalusia, from the Canary Islands (Martín & Saiz, 09 December 2020). In the video it was said that the immigrants came without a PCR test and that they were source of contagion; eventually, a large part of the population started to be worried, especially in

relation to the spread of the Covid-19 through the arrival of the migrants. The Popular Party and Vox[44] immediately requested the hearing of the Minister of the Interior, Fernando Grande-Marlaska, so that he explained what they referred to as "secret transfers" carried out "at night and with deliberate intent" by the government [45] (Martín & Saiz, 09 December 2020). The reality was that these transfers were not organized by the government, but the opacity of the central institutions has only fueled speculation and confusion. This secrecy is also explained by EU pressure to keep the flow of migrants from reaching Europe.

In a second stage, after the pressure from the opposition parties, the Spanish government's response was to reinforce controls at airports as of December the 11th to prevent migrants from moving freely towards the mainland. Some of my interlocutors[46] speculated that this decision corresponded to electoral interests: seeing that the free movement of migrants and their arrival to other Spanish cities was being used by other parties to spread fear and to attack the government, they decided to put an end to the freedom of movement of migrants. Thus, although the migrants are free to move throughout Spanish territory if they have their personal documents and until their return proceedings are executed, the Government took advantage of the controls linked to the pandemic to prevent the transit of people in an irregular situation who were trying to leave the Canary Islands (Sánchez, 2020).

The justifications in relation to Covid-19 and the perimeter closure control of the different regions in Spain[47] was intended to cover up racial profiling practices: requesting documentation only from people of Maghrebi appearance would entail their selection based on their ethnic-racial features or profile, an illegal practice and one for which Spain has already been condemned by the UN (Sánchez, 11 December 2020). These practices have been denied by both the Ministry of the Interior and the police, who claimed to be carrying out a routine citizen security check, on the grounds of the movement restrictions of certain regions. However, witnesses who were able to observe the situation from the airport said to journalists that "although [the police agents] asked everyone for their documents, they hardly looked at them. One of [the passengers] was not registered in

[44] Vox is a far-right party founded in 2013 in Spain and led by party president Santiago Abascal.
[45] My own translation.
[46] They asked me to not reveal their names when it came to these political matters.
[47] At that time there was in Spain a restriction of movement between different regions. One could only travel for very specific reasons. However, in practice, the controls were rare.

Madrid and was not required to show any documents. [The police] only stopped longer with people who looked Moroccan"[48] (Sánchez, 11 December 2020). It was on the basis of this type of illegal practice that an appeal was subsequently brought to court so that the migrants would not be specifically controlled and could leave the islands with their papers in order.

The consequences of this lockout of migrants on the islands were evident. Although there was an effort by the Spanish authorities to increase deportations to Morocco since the end of the year, the number of return flights was limited to three per week, with 20 passengers per plane (Arencibia, 2021). In this scenario, there were many stories of migrants being detained at the airport itself, even when they had a valid asylum request document. Lawyer Daniel Arencibia explained to me how he himself had tried to help a young man from Mali to leave the island. He told me that the man had all his asylum papers in order, which normally guarantees free movement through the national territory. He explained that he himself bought the ticket for him to go to Madrid, to a relative's house, took him to the airport and made sure to explain to the airline operators that the young man was allowed to take the flight because he had the documents justifying that he was an asylum seeker. However, once Daniel left the airport, someone called him to tell him that the young Malian had not been allowed to take the plane. And this type of situation did not only occur at airports; the director of Colegio León also explained to me during my visit that some of the migrants had tried to take a boat to mainland Spain, but the same control and blocking process is applied at ports. Even for those who come with their own lawyers.

In this context, Daniel Arencibia himself filed an appeal against the blockade of migrants in the airports and ports of the Canary Islands, the resolution of which was made official on April 14th. The lawyer took to court the case of Tawfik, a 25-year-old Moroccan man who tried to leave the island three times with his passport in hand and was prevented from doing so on all three occasions (Martín M. , 21 April 2021). The lawyer's objective was to take one of the cases to court because he understood that the principle of equality will be applied and what would be valid for one case will then be applied for all. Thus, on April 14th, 2021, Ángel Teba, judge of the Administrative Court number 5 of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, issued an order to the High Police Headquarters of the region to allow

[48] My own translation.

Tawfik, who had tried to travel from Gran Canaria to Barcelona on December 11th, 2020, to finally take his flight (Vargas N. , 14 April 2021).

Eventually, officially since that date, the passport or the asylum application are prove enough for migrants to travel from the Canary Islands to mainland Spain. As Arencibia stated in an interview, "it is not possible that they are only considered free in the Canary Islands" (RTVE, 14 April 2021). In fact, the only reason why the retention of migrants in the archipelago has been possible is because of the insularity of the territory, which makes it easier to exhaustively control who gets out and who does not. Since last April, more and more migrants have been able to travel to other Spanish regions justifying a change of address. Indeed, although with the new court order migrants cannot be detained as easily as before, the requirements to be able to leave the islands are not easy: they have to justify a compelling reason that allows them to bypass the perimeter closure that some regions in Spain still maintain. This requires going through notaries and consulates, and many of those who try do not make it to the plane, but the impossibility to circumvent the police control has been overcome. Volunteers and lawyers such as Daniel Arencibia are accompanying the migrants through the process and their mediation is facilitating their departure.

Through the evolution of the situation regarding the mobility of migrants wishing to leave the Canary Islands, it also becomes evident the evolution of practices in the new migratory infrastructure. The new network of actors that make up this new infrastructure also determines the practices and evolutions taking place within. Moreover, this reconfiguration often goes beyond the intentions and control of those who set it up. Thus, the changing strategy of Spanish institutions has been circumvented by external mediators who have changed the course of imposed institutional practices: both the volunteer lawyers and the improvised drivers who took migrants to the airport before controls were reinforced[49] (Sánchez, 19 December 2020) are examples of the fluidity of this new infrastructure that is constantly evolving.

[49] A., a Moroccan resident in the Canary Islands, had been involved since last November 15 in transporting migrants from the hotels where they were staying in emergency accommodations to the airport for a price much lower than that demanded by the official taxi drivers. Since the 11th of December he said he was not working anymore because migrants were not being let out.

VII.II. Expanding temporalities and new forms of solidarity

As B. Larkin explains, infrastructures "shape the nature of a network, its speed and direction of movement, its temporalities and its vulnerability to breakdown" (2018). In the case of the migratory infrastructure of the Canary Islands, the temporality seems to be different for the different groups that participate in it. While, after months of waiting, many of the migrants have managed to leave the island, many others are still there, distributed in the different macro-camps, or on the street, and without any expectations for the months to come. For these last ones, the temporality seems to be constantly expanding.

During the first months of 2021, the arrival of immigrants to the Canary Islands has continued to increase. Between January the 1st and April the 30th, there have been 4,411 migrants rescued in patera or cayuco on its coasts, which represents 2,525 more people compared to the same period in 2020 (Bautista, 18 May 2021). These have been added to the thousands of immigrants who, until the month of April, were still on the islands without a clear possibility to leave. Most of them were staying in one of the 6 macro-camps scattered throughout the archipelago. Although the situation seems to have become less critical since the official publication of the court order in mid-April, it is estimated that a total of 2,288 people are still inside the camps (Vega, 31 May 2021). In this sense and given that the camps have been conceived to be permanent reception structures, we can predict that, for those who do not manage to leave by their own means, the situation of stagnation on the islands will be prolonged until their deportation can be carried out.

The situation is particularly worrying for the dozens of migrants who, after refusing to be transferred to the macro-camps, object of great controversy since their opening, were left living on the street and for those who were directly expelled for bad behavior (Vega, 31 May 2021; García, 27 May 2021). Although the care of people sleeping on the streets is the responsibility of the municipalities, the local administrations claim that it is the central government that is responsible for migration issues. In this context, the social and health care of homeless migrants has been entirely dependent on citizen organizations (Hernández, 09 May 2021). New citizen groups, such as the *Somos Red* association, have emerged precisely with the aim of responding to the needs of these people. Other already established NGOs, such as Cáritas, explain that since the beginning of the year the number

of people they attend to in their social canteens in Gran Canaria has multiplied due to the demand of homeless immigrants (ibid.).

There are many examples of citizen organizations that have organized themselves in recent months to support and show solidarity with immigrants in the islands, also with the aim of counteracting the xenophobic movements that have been emerging. It is these same citizen solidarity movements that have managed, through pressure on local and regional administrations, to get the central government to study on a case-by-case basis the readmissions to the reception centers and camps of people who find themselves currently on the streets (ibid.). In Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, a forum was held with the participation of NGOs and citizen groups, as well as other institutions, with the aim of discussing and agreeing on local responses to the reality of migration in the city. As a result of this meeting, it was concluded to facilitate the obtention of the municipal registry for migrants, which would allow them to leave the island more easily or to access health care and social assistance.

These are, again, examples of the evolution of this migratory infrastructure in the islands and new ways of doing and ways of circumventing and reorganizing the administrative frameworks provided by this infrastructure. This new infrastructure has also given rise to a multiplicity of new possibilities and mechanisms that make relations within it more complex: a citizens' collective that assists, accompanies or welcomes migrants in homeless situations, a city council that provides a space in which a comprehensive welcome for migrants is offered, a municipality that is considering making more accesible the registration in the local census to facilitate the transit to the continent, or a mayor who asks for help from other local institutions to promote a model of solidarity.

It is important to keep in mind that the stay in the Canary Islands is, for most migrants, simply a stage in their migratory project. In this sense, when their stay in the islands is extended for months, frustration and despair arise because they are unable to continue their journey. As I have been able to verify in following the journey of several of the migrants I have met on the islands, once they arrive on the mainland, everything seems to speed up. Insularity seems to present itself, in this context, as an added obstacle to the mobility of migrants: once they manage to leave the isolated territory, the rest of the stages on their migratory journey were much faster. For example, N. had arrived on the islands at the end of November and stayed in different hotels until the beginning of March. After about three months stuck on the islands, which is not a long time compared to other

migrants, he was transferred to a city in Spanish mainland. By the end of April, just two months later, he had already crossed borders and reached the city of Paris after a brief stay in Barcelona. Similarly, Z., who had arrived on the islands in January, was transferred to the mainland at the end of March. After her arrival in Spain, it took her only one month to reach the French capital.

For those who have been on the island for more than six months, or the many others who are still there, the situation is even more critical. The chronification of the migratory situation on the islands has not only had consequences for the migrants, but also for Canarian society. As we will see below, the new migratory infrastructure has also served as a channel for new political discourses against migrants and for the development of collective solidarity practices.

Chapter VIII. Social and political consequences of the mismanagement

VIII.I. Polarization of society: blaming the innocent

One of the direct consequences of the weakened and insufficient reception system in the islands and the containment policy deployed through the Plan Canarias has been an increase in hate speech and hate crimes against immigrants. At a time when the Canary Islands are facing an unprecedented economic and social crisis, mainly due to the lack of tourism caused by Covid-19, the mismanagement of the migratory situation has led to an increase in anti-immigrant protests, racist aggressions and a spread of xenophobic discourse. To a large extent, immigrants have been used as a scapegoat for the lack of tourism and, initially, also for the arrival of the virus in the archipelago.

The first gatherings against migrants took place in November 2020 in the town of Arguineguín, when the town's Fishermen's Guild organized two anti-immigration demonstrations to protest against the situation at the town's dock[50]. The march was also attended by political representatives such as the mayoress of the municipality and the Vox deputy in the Congress for the region of Las Palmas (Bauluz & Martín, 31 January 2021). During these first demonstrations banners could be read such as “Hotel? No, repatriation” or “Aid for the Canary Islanders”. These types of messages highlight a feeling of

[50] The dock of Arguineguín has been presented in previous sections.

confrontation between locals and immigrants, as if the latter came to fight and take the resources that the locals already do not have. The same messages were repeated during other demonstrations that were organized in different parts of the island. As the Arguineguín dock emptied and migrants were transferred to other types of facilities, the demonstrations intensified and multiplied.

The main reason why part of the neighbors of the island protested against the immigrants was the lack of tourism. The platform "Salvemos el turismo en Mogán"[51] was one of the first groups to call for demonstrations in different coastal towns of the southern municipality of Mogán. Thus, little by little, a cause-effect association was constructed between the lack of tourism and the arrival of migrants to the island, with no apparent mention of the pandemic. The role of fake news and social media was key in the spread of this type of rumors (CEAR, 2021). From the beginning of the increase in arrivals, information began to be published on social media about the supposed negative implications that the presence of migrants would have for tourism and the Canary Islands economy. When migrants began to be placed in the empty hotels, rumors about how migration was behind the lack of tourism circulated already all around the island. Upon my arrival to Gran Canaria I very quickly noticed the extent to which this type of speech was generalized. The first person with whom I talked when I got there, the taxi driver who picked me up at the airport, already explained to me how the migratory situation was very detrimental to the tourism: "I drove a German couple back to the airport last week and they told me they were very disappointed because in the hotel next to theirs there were dozens illegal immigrants"[52]. He even told me that insecurity had increased on the areas where migrants were staying: "they get into peoples' lands and they steal food, even in shops". It was the first of many encounters of this type.

Iratxe Serrano, General Director for Child and Family Protection of the Government of the Islads, explained to me what she thought was the source of this increase in the xenophobic speech on the islands:

> "People are very tense. There is no work... The Canary Islands live fundamentally from tourism, it is their main sector. If there is no tourism sector at the moment, people get upset. I think we should all be able to analyze this context, right? And

[51] "Let's save the tourism in Mogán" in English.
[52] Notes from my fieldwork.

> everything as a whole. But telling a person who is having a hard time, who surely has no possibility to make ends meet, that these people who come here still have a much more vulnerable situation than the citizens of the Canary Islands... it is hard to understand for some people" (Serrano, 2021).

I think she is right when he says that this racism actually vehiculates the fear and frustration generated by the pandemic. Moreover, it has also come to add to the already existing feeling of abandonment from the population of the archipelago. In this sense, when a large part of the islanders is unemployed - 25,42% in the island of Gran Canaria in May 2021 (Obecan, 2021)- seeing the migrants staying in the empty luxury hotels has very quickly sparked the fire of racism. Daniel Buraschi, a member of the Social Action and Research Network (RAIS)[53], defines this racism as *democratic racism*. He explains that "it excludes migrants by appealing to democratic values, so that the violation of their rights becomes justifiable [...]. For example, referring to a potential health threat and then justifying radical measures based on a pseudo-principle of justice, with arguments such as *immigrants receive too much* or *the government has abandoned us, but it puts them in a hotel*" (Vega, 02 November 2020). In short, resentment is here mobilized on the basis of legitimate principles such as the right to health or a concern for economic well-being.

Eventually, the peaceful demonstrations transformed in real aggressions against immigrants, perpetrated in the south of the island and also in the capital city of Las Palmas. Citizens organized themselves through Whatsapp groups to go "Moor[54] hunting" and voice messages from these groups were leaked to the press in which one could hear "We are fully armed. The Moors are going to die" or "Starting tomorrow we are going hunting. If we see a group of four or five Moors together: we start beating them"[55] (Ramos & Robaina, 22 January 2021). Acts of violence against migrants were more abundant in the neighborhoods where the large macro-camps are located in the capital, especially in the neighborhood of El Lasso. As I have already presented, these areas where the xenophobic discourse has penetrated the deepest are the most disadvantaged neighborhoods of the city. In the neighborhood of El Lasso, where the Colegio León camp

[53] R.A.I.S. is an interdisciplinary space that combines research with social action. Its objective is to build bridges between academic and popular knowledge in order to construct a dialogue of knowledge useful for social transformation. More information on their website https://www.redrais.com/.
[54] I use the term Moor here because is the equivalent of "moro", the word used in the real messages. It is a term of popular and colloquial use to designate, without clear distinction between religion, ethnicity or culture, the natives of Northwest Africa or Maghreb. In Spanish, it has a clearly pejorative connotation.
[55] My own translation.

is located, seven Moroccan migrants were attacked by organized groups of neighbors in just five days (Martín M. , 13 January 2021). The migrants themselves explained that neighbors would drive around the neighborhood in cars and when they saw them, they would stop and show them knives or machetes and shoot in the air with blank bullets. This type of aggression led the director of the center to advise the residents not to leave the camp site (Martín, M., 13 January 2021). In another of the nearby neighborhoods where another Moroccan man was brutally assaulted, the Zarate neighborhood, several locals explained to journalists that "the Moors are going to have a hard time. If one comes, he either wakes up in the ICU or in a box" (ibid.).

This behavior stems, on the one hand, from the criminalization of immigrants, a phenomenon that is not new. In various parts of the island, immigrants have been accused of committing robberies or sexual assaults, and it is these issues that have been mainly mobilized in these neighborhoods to protest against the presence of the immigrants. The government delegation itself has had to intervene to deny the alleged increase in crime: "the data reflect that the Canary Islands are not experiencing a situation of exceptionality in terms of public safety", declared the government delegate himself (Martín M. , 04 February 2021). He assured that the crime rate had dropped since 2019 and it is the lowest in the last four years; he added that of the 122 criminal offenses committed by immigrants arriving in patera in recent months, 60 were crimes of documentary falsehood. Of the remaining 62 infractions, 45 were of some relevance, Pestana assured, but most were aggressions among the migrants themselves, small robberies and thefts, and all those found guilty had been arrested (ibid.). This type of accusations and violent behavior towards immigrants does not represent the total population of the Canary Islands, but many different media and experts agree that the mismanagement of the migratory event in the archipelago has generated an unprecedented wave of xenophobia in the islands. The president of the region himself, Ángel Víctor Torres, declared that xenophobia had "undoubtedly" increased, and blamed for it the anti-immigration speeches heard in Congress (Vega, 02 November 2020). Indeed, as I will show in the following section, extreme right-wing political parties did not hesitate to exploit the climate of social tension generated by the economic and social situation of the islands and the arrival of migrants to incite hatred against immigrants, spreading lies and hoaxes.

In any case, it is important to note that the Canary Islands are traditionally a very culturally mixed territory, with a high rate of South American, European and African

citizens. The current wave of anti-foreigner apprehension is not an intrinsic characteristic of the majority of the region's population, but rather a reaction to a markedly adverse social and political climate. As Txema Santana explained during our conversation:

> "These are not *genetic* outbreaks of racism, if we can call it like that, they are expressions of ignorance of a poorly explained situation. That is to say, the cable of racism can be cut off with a good management of migrations. If you store people in a dock, make them sleep on the floor, do not let them show their pain, do not allow, do not offer the necessary information to the citizenship to understand a complex and global phenomenon such as migrations, and then create centers to host them in the most disadvantaged neighborhoods, what is going to happen is what we are seeing right now" (Santana, 2020).

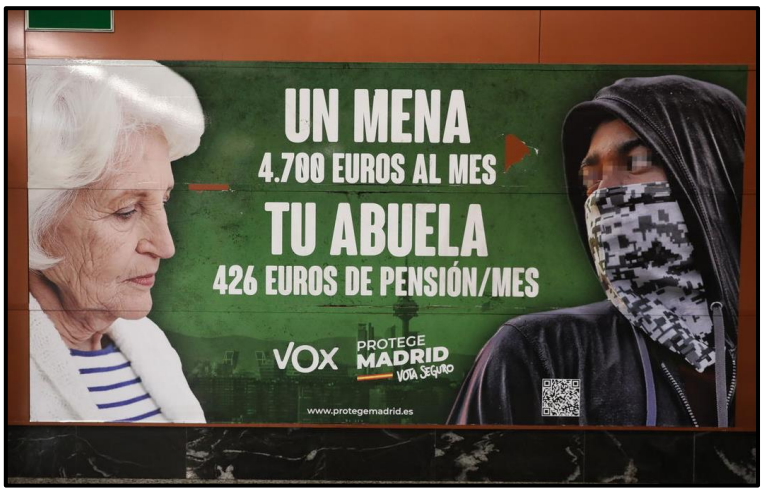
Although the migratory pressure on the islands has been easing since last April, when migrants began to be able to continue their migratory projects, the political consequences of the management of the migratory event and the deficient infrastructure in place have not faded away and continue to be widely reflected in the political discourse of a large part of the islands' inhabitants.

VIII.II. Political instrumentalization: the rise of the extreme right

The origin of many of the repeated purposes in the different anti-immigration demonstrations in the archipelago, have their origin in the political speeches of the VOX party, which has appropriated the anti-immigration discourse in the islands. Although it has not been the only party that has nurtured the racist discourse[56], I will focus on it as it seems to me the most blatant example of how the migratory event of the islands has been instrumentalized for political purposes. I will try here to expose some of the hoaxes that the far right-wing party has generated and how these have been conveyed in the Canarian society.

[56] Coalición Canaria, a regionalist center-right party, and the Popular Party, the main opposition leader at this time and a traditional right-wing party in Spain, have also on multiple occasions made statements characterizing the situation in the Canary Islands as an "invasion" and encouraging mass deportations. For more information, read Vargas, N. (4th of December of 2020). "Vox abandera el discurso anti-inmigración para arañar en Canarias la notoriedad que no logró en las urnas", *El Diario*, Vox abandera el discurso anti-inmigración para arañar en Canarias la notoriedad que no logró en las urnas (eldiario.es).

It is important to point out that Vox has, for the moment, no representation in any administration in the Canary Islands: neither in the regional Parliament, nor in the seven island councils, nor in any of the 88 municipalities. However, the far right-wing formation in the Islands has opted to lead the anti-immigration discourse in the current context. Using hoaxes, war language and hyperboles such as "invasion" or "wave of illegal immigrants", Vox has led up to three demonstrations demanding the expulsion of people arriving by sea to the archipelago (Vargas N. , 4 December 2020). This was a clear political strategy to try to increase its visibility in the region, which seems to have worked.



XII Vox's political billboard reading "un unaccompanied minor, 4,700 euros per month. Your grandmother, 426 euros of pension per month". Photograph by Europa Press retrieved from Telemadrid.

Appealing to the feeling of abandonment of the archipelago by the central government, the party leader Santiago Abascal, tried during different visits to several of the islands, to show himself and his party as the only one who really cared about the welfare of the Canary Islanders who were "facing a triple crisis": the economic and social crisis created by the lack of tourism, a "freedom crisis" due to the restrictions imposed by the "communist" government in relation to Covid-19, and the migratory crisis generated by the "invasion of their islands by the illegals"[57]. In this sense, in multiple occasions I could read in internet forums or online news comments that, indeed, Vox was starting to be perceived by part of the Canarian population as the only party that cared about them, as these two comments from a local news online forum show[58]:

[57] The information presented here is retrieved from a political meeting of Santiago Abascal in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, which had place on the 5th of December 2020. Available on youtube: #StopInvasiónMigratoria | Discurso completo de Santiago Abascal en Canarias - YouTube.

[58] Comments retrieved from the forum section of a piece of news published by the electronic journal Canarias7, "Vox se echa a la calle para pedir una mejor gestión de la inmigración" on the 29th November

> "It is the only party that actually does something for Spain. And the only one that fights for the Canary Islands ... and that pulls strings ..."
>
> "For the good of the Canary Islands, may Vox come out as the next governing party. We will stop being the broken toy of the central government".

In a context of economic desperation in which many people are having a hard time, it has been easy to appeal to emotions and project fear and frustration onto the newcomers, the immigrants. In this sense, Vox representatives insisted that the immigrants hosted in the hotels were on vacation "with everything included: swimming pool and food" while the Canarian economy was "bleeding to death" (Vargas N. , 4 December 2020). This same discourse, which was inherently false since migrants staying in hotels did not have access swimming pools or other luxury services, was later taken up by some right-wing media and journalists, as well as by the citizens of the Canary Islands themselves (ibid.) and came to reinforce the protest movement against immigrants in hotels.

Vox's discourse has mainly focused on immigrants from the Maghreb, especially Morocco. In this sense, I have identified on multiple occasions elements in the discourse of my interlocutors that the representatives of the Vox party had previously used in different political meetings. In a particular political act in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Santiago Abascal stated the following regarding these group of migrants:

> "[...] Those who come here in mother ships[59], most of them in military age and in much better physical shape than many of us... these are not refugees, we are dealing with something else. We are dealing with mass immigration, promoted by the powers, by the Spanish and European elites and oligarchies. [...] We are facing a migratory invasion. We demand a halt to this illegal immigration that generates uncertainty, that generates insecurity for the elderly, that generates insecurity for many women... [...] We demand a halt to this illegal immigration that has become a real discrimination for Spaniards and, in this case, specifically for the Canary Islanders. [...] The message must be made clear to the whole of Africa: that whoever enters Spain illegally will live in perpetual illegality and will never be

2020. Retrieved from https://www.canarias7.es/politica/echa-calle-pedir-20201129143710-nt.html. My own translation.

[59] With this, the leader of Vox is referring to images published in different media in which it is seen how a large boat takes immigrants to the limit of the waters belonging to Morocco, where they are then released in small boats or pateras to finish the journey to the islands.

> regularized. That is, if we have not managed to deport them. The message has to go out that whoever enters our house -Spain-, our soil, illegally, must abandon all hope of working legally among us".

We can compare the words of the leader of Vox with an excerpt from an interview I conducted with Tom Smulders, leader of FEHT:

> "I think the only way is to talk the countries themselves, especially the ones that abuse hospitality, the boys coming from Morocco, we pick them up and save them. And they're all saved... You talk to people and you ask the monitors and the workers and the security guys in reception centers about the boys from Mali or Equatorial Guinea and stuff and they say "look, except in specific situations, their behavior is excellent". But Europe has to get tough, especially with Morocco. I don't know where the king of Morocco gets the money to buy a castle in the center of Paris, all those things [the weapons bought from the United States]; do you understand what I mean? It's not appropriate. [...] This needs to stop, and we are not going to offer our hotels to host this kind of... Let's say, our hotels are not going to be filled with economic migrants" (Smulders, 2021).

This does not mean that my interviewee agrees with Vox's ideas, it simply shows how the discourses issued by a particular actor are reproduced and updated in different collectives in different ways. The idea that Moroccan migrants arriving irregularly to the Canary coasts are soldiers sent by the King of Morocco corresponds to a fairly widespread conspiracy theory. I do not know exactly where and how this theory emerged, but the main idea is that Mohammed VI is sending on purpose all these "young strong men" as part of a bigger plan to invade or conquer the Canary Islands which, geographically, "should" belong that country. The idea is not to deny that diplomatic tensions between Spain and Morocco play an important role in the latter's use of immigration as a tool for political pressure, but rather to point to the way in which these dynamics are exaggerated and caricatured by the far-right party and some media to feed the image of invasion, and then vehiculated through social discourse.

In reality, the dichotomy, present in much of the discourse on immigration in the islands, between the sub-Saharan and North African contingents corresponds to historical trends in Spain's relations with different countries and to the distinction between "refugees" and "economic immigrants". In any case, it is true that the general apprehension felt towards

Maghrebi immigrants is stronger than that towards sub-Saharan Africans. This is also evidenced by several of my interlocutors:

> "The general population has a very different concept of Sub-Saharan Africans than it has of North Africans. I don't know how [the migrants in our reception center] would have been accepted if they were Maghrebis, but being sub-Saharans, they were very well accepted [...]. We had some difficulty when a small group of North African boys arrived. Because it's different with the North African boys, you know? [...] With everything that has come up now, they [the Maghrebis] are all in the spotlight. Anyone, even if they are just walking down the street, even if they look like a Maghrebi and they're really not..." (Suárez, 2021).

> "It is said that the Maghrebis are all bad, they are thieves, they are violent, well no... [...] The Spaniards, they have something, a background against the Arabs and what they tell you, they always tell me, I don't know why tell me, I guess because I am from sub-Saharan Africa, they tell me *no, I have no problem with blacks, but with arabs...* no... you cannot say that. You cannot generalize. I think this is a story from the past and they are afraid of the invasion. They even talk about *invasion* regarding nowadays immigration, because it happened before in history and it's in their imaginary" (Cheikh, 2021).

It is not my purpose to make a historical analysis of the relations between North African countries and Spain, but I believe that these interview excerpts reflect very well the dichotomy in the perception of these two profiles of migrants. Both Vox and other media and political parties have known how to exploit this part of the Spanish collective imaginary to increase the sense of invasion and security. It has been a way for them to place themselves in a political scenario in which, until now, they were not present. In fact, a poll carried out last February on the upcoming elections in the Canary Islands predicts the entry of Vox for the first time in the regional parliament of the Canary Islands with two seats, as well as in the island parliaments of Gran Canaria and Tenerife with one seat each (Europa Press, 07 February 2021).

Taking this into account, it is evident that the migratory event in the Canary Islands has transcended the field related to migration management, and its consequences can also be seen in the political and social sphere. The reconfiguration of the Canarian *borderscape* and the consequent migratory infrastructure that emerged from it, has given rise, not only

to new practices in migration management, but also to new discourses and political practices. It remains to be seen, in the upcoming elections, whether these consequences are transitory or will crystallize in the political spectrum of the region with the irruption of Vox in the different island political instances.

These political reactions to the migratory situation on the island on the part of the local population also condition the measures taken by the central institutions which will act according to these behaviors. This is the case with the previously mentioned blockade of immigrants on the island as of December 11th: the central government decides, based on the negative reactions of the population, to keep the immigrants on the island away from the mainland. In the same way, it is in response to the discontent of the insular population that the immigrants installed in one of the macro-camps decide to begin to tidy up the neighborhood. All this readjusts the infrastructure that organizes and regulates the circulation of migrants. This process can be identified as a form of recursiveness: the effects in turn become causes. It is in these evolutions that we see the fluidity characteristic of this new infrastructure.

Conclusion

Through this thesis, I have managed to show how the migratory crisis has been constructed throughout the past year 2020 in the archipelago of the Canary Islands. I have addressed how the emergency response to the migratory event in the islands has reconfigured, not only the materiality of the border and the actors that compose it, but also the collective imaginary of the Canarian society as well as its political composition. But what does the example of the Canary Islands reveal about border management patterns in other European scenarios?

The unprecedented context generated by the coronavirus has revealed the vulnerabilities and failures already existing on the European migration control system. On the one hand, this situation has unveiled the fragility of a system based on the refoulement of migrants. In a context such as the current one in which this is not possible, the system collapses and has very little capacity to offer other alternatives. In this sense, the contradictions and conflicts that have arisen at the different institutional levels - local, national and international - are revelatory of the lack of coordination in the conception of policies at the European level and their implementation at the local level. This lack of coordination and agreement ends up translating, as the example of the Canary Islands shows, into a major social conflict.

To this effect, this thesis opens the possibilities to the study of the impact that European migration policies have, beyond the migrants themselves, on the host society as a whole. I have been able to present how the collective imaginary that the Canarian society has about migrants has been modified due to the questionable management of the migratory event. Thus, the increase in racist discourse and mobilizations is evident. More particularly, the implementation, more or less coordinated, of these policies generates the division of the local population. Hence, along with racist demonstrations, a whole movement of support and new forms of collective citizen solidarity have also emerged. In addition, migration management has not only modified the social fabric of the islands, but everything suggests that it will have long-term consequences on its political fabric, especially in relation to the increase in support for the extreme right embodied in Vox. The pandemic and its consequences and effects have had the capacity to accelerate these social and political changes that, in another context, would have needed more time to be identified.

Another element to be highlighted is that of mobility, which in a context such as the current one, has become a major sanitary matter. Interestingly, even in this context of exceptional mobility control, and not only for migrants but for all of us, the European border control system has not managed to contain the entire migrant population on the island as it was at first expected. The intervention of the Spanish judiciary, which confirmed the freedom of movement of the migrants, provided they have the necessary documents, highlights once again the plurality of contradictory rules at different levels. Although this control system only provides for the transfer of a marginal group of people, the vulnerable, I have observed that many of the "non-vulnerable" migrants have also been able, in the end, to continue their migratory projects in other European countries, France in particular.

In this sense, this thesis also invites us to reflect on the need to include, in the conception of these migration policies, the migrants themselves as active actors. Far from being a passive element in the migration infrastructure, migrants manage, through their actions, to modify in turn this same infrastructure. Similarly, the role of the host societies themselves in the process of developing and managing these practices must also be increased. Otherwise, it ends up generating, as I have explained in the case of the Canary Islands, a feeling of incomprehension and abandonment on the part of the national institutions, Spanish in this case, and also European, which are not beneficial either for one or the other party,

It has been impossible for me to address all the topics that could have been dealt with in the framework of this thesis. Of particular importance is the situation of unaccompanied minors on the island, who have a particular status in this whole system, and whose number had never been so high, not even during the cayuco crisis. In this regard, there has been a great controversy in the islands regarding the alleged "invasion" of the reception center for minors by older adults. With the collapse of the health centers due to Covid, it has not been possible to prove the age of any of these individuals either, so the situation has generated serious management problems.

I would also have liked to explore in more depth the compositions and adaptations of the border control systems on the islands, both of the National Police and Frontex, but I was not given access to them during my fieldwork. Nor did I get a response from any of the consulates I tried to contact to obtain information on the official position of the migrants'

countries of origin. Here are two elements that would be interesting to explore in future work.

In conclusion, it will be interesting to observe the evolution of the migratory infrastructure of the Canary Islands in the future: the consolidation and permanence of the new actors and the consequences of the practices developed during this period. As indicated by the arrival of more than 8,000 people swimming into the Spanish enclave of Ceuta at the end of May 2021 (El País, 25 May 2021), immigration control continues to play a central role in Spanish domestic and foreign policy. In this sense, it is essential to generate a system for the management, reception and relocation of these migrants in accordance with global mobility trends and resistant to external eventualities such as this pandemic.

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